



Final Report – BSN Sports & Matt Power
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University of Mary – BUS 340 01

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Introduction	4
Challenges of a Manager	5
Strategy Responsibilities	6
Selling Process/Prospects	7
Code of Conduct	8
Sales Representatives	8
Training	9
Sales Contests	10
Quota System	11
Company Development Programs	12
Forecasting	12
Company Territories	13
Evaluation System	13
Ethical Standards/Issues	14
Conclusions and Recommendations	14
Appendices	15

Abstract

This project will explain the philosophies and duties of the branch manager at BSN Sports in Bismarck, Matt Power. The different sections addressed will introduce Matt and BSN Sports, explain Matt’s duties as manager, define BSN’s sales prospects, address how Matt manages his representatives, describe his philosophies and training styles, evaluate BSN programs to develop employees, report compensation techniques, give thought to ethical standards of BSN, and justify our own recommendations for BSN. This presentation will also define BSN Sports, and explain its developments as a company. BSN Sports is an extremely well-developed company, and Matt Power is a successful and decorated sales manager with a talent in building relationships with the people surrounding him. This paper will express how Matt uses these personal talents in order to benefit him in his position he is in at BSN Sports, as branch manager.

Introduction

We completed our interview on Matt Power, the branch manager for BSN Sports. BSN Sports was founded in 1972 as a factory-direct equipment company. This enterprise is the largest distributor of team sports apparel and equipment in the United States. One unique feature of BSN Sports is their ability to supply for athletes and coaches from grade school to college and beyond. BSN is the main distributor for the athletics teams at Umary.

Matt Power has been the branch manager for BSN for three years. Matt originally received his undergrad in education, and continued his studies receiving his MBA. Matt originally worked at an accounting firm his uncle recommended and had previously worked at, but realized this was not for him. Matt enjoyed sports and coaching baseball, so he realized his engaging personality would be a great fit for BSN. Matt became a sales representative for BSN, and soon after became the branch manager. Matt made a point in expressing the differences between being a sales representative for BSN and leading representatives as a branch manager.

BSN Sports partners with Nike, UA, Wilson, The Rock, New Balance, Spalding, Easton, Rawlings, Gear-Pro Tec as well as many more companies. BSN also offers their own clothing line in which they also sell along these partnerships.

The company mission and goal of BSN Sports is to remove any hassles related to purchasing uniforms, equipment, and spirit wear. The mission also follows along those lines by focusing on elevating student experience, the heart of the game, and overall being a more personal and less transactional company. The University of Mary’s women's basketball team got to experience this hassle-free mission from BSN first hand as Matt has personally come to multiple practices with different pairs of gear and clothes so the team could personally pick which one they liked best.



Challenges of a Manager

Matt expressed a number of challenges as a branch manager, but he also responded to these challenges with an extremely optimistic attitude. From our analysis, Matt had the right personality and attitude towards adversity and perseverance in order to be a successful branch manager. The number one challenge for Matt as a branch manager is finding the right type of sales reps, and then on-boarding the news reps. One interesting fact about Matt is that he likes hiring on student-athletes on to his sales force. He believes these are the types of employees that have energy, are able to overcome obstacles, and have an “embrace-change” attitude because of the experiences they have had through athletics. Matt stated that he would rather have employees who have had less sales experience and are willing to train and learn. This way, employees are able to learn the BSN Sports system. Although Matt would rather have employees that have not have previous sales experience and are willing to learn, it is still a challenge for him and the company.

Matt spoke about the challenge of on-boarding new reps. The job of sales reps is 25% talking to coaches, and 75% order entry and follow-up. It is important Matt helps the sales rep learn the product and process so they are able to do the 75% extremely well. There is a number of new systems of technology the reps must learn before they are sent out on their first call. It is crucial for Matt that the sales reps have extensive knowledge about the product and process before they represent BSN Sports.



Strategy Responsibilities

One thing that Matt talked so highly about was this new app that BSN has implemented. As sales manager, one of Matt's main strategy responsibilities is familiarizing his sales reps with and how to use this app. Matt talked about how this app is really separating BSN Sports from competing companies simply because no one else has anything like it. Matt stressed the importance of the app as in today's society working through technology is becoming most efficient. The app is treated like a digitized coach in your pocket, you can take it with you wherever you go and can use it as a guide to coach you through any sales meeting. For example, the app will start off by having you pick which type of customer you are meeting with, it will then ask you your relationship with this client and then within those answers it will provide the best possible sales solution to go into the meeting with. Not only is the app changing the face of BSN but is going to set the tone and standard for other companies that aren't doing this. This sales strategy is an easy way to always make sure his reps are prepared for any situation and allows the reps to feel more comfortable over all knowing they have always had something to look back on.



Selling Process/Prospects

Matt talked a lot about how the selling process at BSN is less based on transactions, and focused more on personal relationships. He talked a lot about how making connection with client plays a big role in the selling process. He said that when they get the opportunity to meet with a client and find their common ground, it is important to focus on discovery. Matt talked about how one of the biggest misses when it comes to sales is not discovering the needs of your client. A lot of companies go into a sales meeting ready to push the products they already have but Matt and BSN find it important to discover the needs of that coach before overwhelming them with products that won't be useful for them or their team. This ties into a term that Matt described as "dropping the rope", he talked about how a lot of times in meetings, the coaches and sales reps are often times finding themselves in a game of tug a war with each other and what they both think is right for them. By dropping the rope, you again, discover the coaches needs and what's important to them by letting them take control of the meeting. With this, you really find the best way to serve your client and that then leads into the closing process which is fairly easy once both the sales rep and the client are on the same terms.

The selling prospects at BSN starts with cold calling. Matt talked about how although cold calling isn't the most personal at times, it is a good start to get the companies name out there and then build off of that connection through more personal interactions. Matt talked about how it was also really important for the company and their sales to reach out to not only just the football and basketball of sports but to sell to these tier three activities such as band, choir or debate. By doing this it not only expands their target market within high school and colleges but it adds more clients as well. Matt is in charge of ten reps and they're day to day responsibilities consist and start with reaching out to current and new client through cold-calling or emails. Once you build that trust within the athletic director or coach by being allowed in the school you can then build off of that relationship which not only leads to sales with that specific client but to referrals as well. Matt talked about how having connections is a huge help because when you have a good relationship with one coach, word spreads and turns into sales. The sales reps also go through weekly sales meetings to see how they are reaching their goals and then how they are going to execute for their upcoming activities.

Code of Conduct

Although Matt did not discuss with us a specific code of conduct he had with his sales representatives or different coaches and teams, we thought we could use this section to discuss how Matt handles confrontation with his own upset sales representatives when changes are made. Different changes that could be made at BSN are switching salespeople to a different sector of sales (dividing territories), moving around a client list, or requesting a change in the way a rep presents their sales presentation. Matt explained that the two most important concepts to remember when defining changes to one of your salespeople is prepare and care.

As a branch manager, you must be prepared going into the meeting with your sales rep. You have to convince your sales representative that you are making the right decision for him or her, and the company. In order to do this, the only way to be successful is going over different possibilities the conversation, and overall, being prepared.

The second concept Matt discussed is care. Care for your employees. Matt expressed that he understands that these decisions made at the workplace will affect his representatives outside of work, such as in their home life. In order to show that you care, Matt expressed the importance of helping his employees understand how this change can benefit this person. Maybe this rep's travel time will get cut down, or they will have a better focus on their current customers depending on the scenario, or maybe the rep will have a more manageable workload. Overall, as a branch manager for BSN, it is important to understand people, and understand your reps in order to be able to handle situation of change.

Sales Representatives

Matt is in charge of 10 sales representatives across North Dakota and South Dakota. For the amount of time Matt is traveling and carrying his own workload, it is important that he is able to adequately spend enough time with his sales reps. Even if Matt is not able to meet with the reps in person, he spoke of a "Zoom" video chat system in which he is able to speak with all reps at once or individually in order to catch up and continue to give tips in order to improve. This is a good system for the amount of time that Matt travels, however, I believe there is still room for improvement.

Matt explained that it was important to him that his sales reps know where they want to be. It is important for him that they have goals. As a sales rep, it is important to never coast through tasks because of commission based salary. Also, a sales rep's performance will reflect on Matt's leadership and managerial abilities.

Training

Matt talked about how when hiring a sales rep, he not only first looks for student athletes as he believes they obtain the skills needed to be successful at BSN but he also looks for as little previous training as possible, ideally fresh out of college. He says this is important to him as a sales manager as he would prefer their first habits to be started by their training. BSN also prides themselves off doing what they can for the student athlete and with this matt said “any second that I can save a coach, is another second he can change that athlete’s life”. This quote really focuses and emphasizes how the employees at BSN are trained to serve their clients as they are very client-based organization and company. One thing that was also interesting that Matt talked about was that even at the sales manager position BSN is offering him opportunities to train and learn and that is something that is pretty important to him as he can always better himself as a manager. Matt also travels by weekly, so he talked about how he is often training his reps through zoom meetings while on the road. Zoom meetings are facetime calls that are a little more personal than just a phone call and Matt finds that these meetings are just as successful as in person meetings, although he would prefer face to face.



Sales Contests

There are many different types of sales contests initiated at BSN Sports, however, Matt is not specifically in favor of sales contests. Matt appreciates employees who are intrinsically motivated. Employees who enjoy to sell/work at BSN, who do not feel the need to be motivated by outside factors, are the type of employees Matt seeks to have on his team.

Nevertheless, BSN Sports does partake in a large number of contests. Nike and Under Armour give incentives to employees who are able to sell great number of their products. Matt did not give us a specific example of how a Nike or Under Armour incentivize his employees, but from what we were able to draw information from, the incentives sounded cash based. Matt also spoke about national meetings he attends as the branch manager. At these meetings, award ceremonies take place where managers/ reps are able to receive extrinsic awards for the work they have done. One major award that is a goal for all sales representatives is the “million-dollar mark.” This award is an incentive for salespeople of BSN to reach because it gives them a type of status above other salespeople.

Matt tends to create sales contests in a different manner. As Matt put it, he likes to “pit two sales people against each other.” This way, he believes it is a healthy competition that is a challenge to his sales people, but also expresses resilience and passion in his employees. This type of competition may not reflect everyone’s management style, but Matt has found success with. He plans on continuing this type of style as long as his salespeople respond well.



Quota System

There is no quota system implemented at BSN. Matt said that the sales reps have goals that can be broken down but, in the end, if they don't meet those goals it doesn't really affect them as sales reps, as they are more money oriented so Matt as a manager, has to worry about those goals. He has to look into their overall net revenue for that year, and their overall margin and percentage mix of hard good products and BSN product. Throughout BSN there are many goals put in place and that is put on Matt as manager to help them achieve those goals. Matt talked more about how BSN does more of a draw system where it is simply a pay advance against expected earnings or commissions. Sales commission structures are usually designed to give an employee some control over how much they earn during a certain time period. It adds a direct incentive to performance which is the more you sell, the more money you'll make.



Company Development Programs

For Matt, there is no specific company program that helps him continue on to further his education or gives him in-house training on how to become a better branch manager. However, Matt did discuss how two years ago the company bought in to management training to a further extent when BSN Sports started attending national conferences and meetings. When we met with Matt, he had just recently gotten back from a sales conference in Phoenix, Arizona. At these conferences, Matt is able to talk with other managers from around the country about their philosophies and standards in regards to their employees. Matt is also able to discuss new technology and building culture within his company. Some new technologies of interest for BSN Sports is a new sales app that helps sales representatives handle different scenarios with coaches. This app is further explained in the strategy responsibilities section of this project.

Matt discussed the importance of building a national footprint at these conferences. Building relationships is important because a company is only as good as its competitors. Matt explained that if a company who shows more successful in a certain area than your company, is willing to offer help, it is important to be able to take this feedback and look to implement their success in your company, as necessary.

Forecasting

Matt was not able to discuss forecasting with us. He made it clear that forecasting was way above the decisions or predictions that he generates, but rather members of BSN “way above him” that make those decisions. Types of aspects BSN Sports would need to forecast the number of products needed for the number of schools the salespeople make deals with. Matt did make it apparent to us, however, that all forecasting done is data driven. At this stage in the company’s business cycle, the business has enough knowledge and of its short-term and long-term performance records so forecasting does not have to be a guessing game. This type of forecasting knowledge helps BSN manage its work force adequately, as well as provide assistance in determining how and what the company should be spending its time and resources on.

Company Territories

BSN Sport is a nationally wide company but when it comes to Matt he covers more of the six states within the Great Lakes region. Matt talked highly about the importance of a national footprint and since BSN covers almost everywhere in the United States, it really helps with sales in terms of again, personal referrals as everyone knows someone in a different state or place so when the company name travels via referral BSN will be able to work for that person no matter where in the states as they have reps all over. Matt also talked about account territories between sales reps and he explained that BSN is driven by technology and with that, in their region, they were able to upload all of the data that they created into this system based on what the expected spend would be based on certain school they are targeting. They can also go based on certain sports as well in their system so now they can know what percentage BSN is penetrated within that school. With that, they can go to a rep with data to back up what they are saying in terms of if that rep is fully covering a school or not and if a certain percent of that school is buying from somewhere else. BSN is very data driven to the point where they can see where they need to optimize certain territories and build off of that.

Evaluation System

Matt didn't talk much on an evaluation system in BSN but he talked about always having a team mindset. With this, the sales reps meet weekly and discuss their goals and how they are going to meet them. They can also share accounts with each other as a part of that team mindset if it is going to overall benefit the company. They are evaluated through data and what percentage of a school or company is actually buying from BSN as the goal for this is always 100%. He talked about the importance of knowing the art and science when it comes to these evaluation meetings. The science is in the spreadsheets and the data that shows the work but the art is how as a manager, you're able to split an account with another sales rep if someone isn't meeting their goal and then still getting them to buy and understand the why of this change.

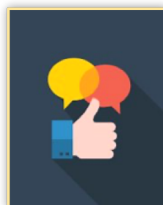
Ethical Standards/Issues

Matt explained that BSN Sports as a company hasn't been involved with any ethical scandals but how when their partnerships are, it affects them directly. Matt said that his biggest experience with an ethical scandal that directly affected BSN Sports was with their partnering company Nike. This happened when the scandal of Colin Kaepernick and kneeling for the national happened. Since Kaepernick was endorsed by Nike many customers and people who were upset with the decision of Kaepernick stopped buying from Nike and this resulted in BSN losing school deals and many customers that were regularly buying Nike products from them. BSN also used to partner with Adidas and ended up going their separate ways as BSN disagreed with the decision being made with Adidas as they thought that this separation would better their company. As Matt said "three stripes and you're out" when talking about their Adidas partnership.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We found it fairly difficult to find recommendations for BSN Sports as they are a very well run and managed company but one thing we thought they could work on was finding a different form of motivation outside of incentives as in a Ted Talk that we watched in class said that incentive-based tasks actually take more time to complete overall and that incentives only motivate positively when it is used for a basic task. We also thought they Matt could also use another way of motivating his reps outside of pitting them against each other as well. We feel that this contradicts the teamwork emphasis Matt was talking about within BSN Sports and feel that it might cause tension and unwanted stress between employees. Lastly, we thought that since Matt travels so much he could find a more personal way to meet with his reps while on the road maybe through facetime.

Overall, we concluded that Matt Power is an extremely efficient and effective manager in the management style and philosophies that he uses. Matt is extremely motivated, personable, and searches to get the best out of his reps. BSN Sports, being the largest distributor of athletic apparel and equipment in the country, is an extremely successful company that continually is making advancements and innovations in order to stay on top. From our interview and analysis, we both expect BSN Sports to continue to climb as the top sports distributor in the country.



Appendices

- Used Matt Power, branch manager at BSN, as a resource for a majority
- <https://www.bsnsports.com/>