

Focus Experts' Briefing: 8 Signs that an Inside Sales Rep Is Burned Out

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What are the top warning signs that an inside sales rep is burned out?

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Executive Summary

The pressure for inside sales reps to perform, hit goals and remain positive and productive can be especially draining on even the most seasoned pro. At some point, most inside sales reps run the risk of becoming burned out at work for various reasons. Nipping an overburdened rep's disenchantment early can save everyone involved a heap of grief —the rep can avoid getting caught in a downward spiral, and your team can be protected from the potential poison an unhappy worker spreads. So, how can you tell if a rep is sliding down the slippery slope toward burnout? In this guide, Focus Experts Michael A Brown, Orlin Camerlo, Michael Dampousse, Kevin Gaither, Kristina McMillan and Chris Snell share their top signs that your inside sales rep is suffering from burnout.

After reading this guide, check out the discussion and join the conversation: <http://focus.com/c/GQD/>.

Expert Advice

1. An optimistic salesperson becomes increasingly negative.
2. The sales rep deflects questions and becomes defensive.
3. The salesperson becomes disengaged.
4. The sales rep's verbal delivery becomes sloppy and lackluster.
5. The sales rep doesn't respond to incentives.
6. Members of the team complain about a salesperson.
7. The salesperson consistently misses goals.
8. The sales rep is no longer managing his/her time productively.

Focus Experts' Briefing: 8 Signs that an Inside Sales Rep Is Burned Out

What are the top warning signs that an inside sales rep is burned out?

1. An optimistic salesperson becomes increasingly negative.

"The reps' attitude shifts toward the negative. Your previously optimistic and creative rep has a 'we've tried that, it doesn't/won't work' attitude about new ideas." (McMillan)

"Frustration or pushback when performance reviews are conducted. Veteran reps are faced with fight or flight when pressed into the corner, and they typically come out swinging if they are fatigued and burning out. They don't know how to communicate or want to communicate fatigue or if they are making other plans silently. It's a hard thing to self-reflect and to realize when something has run its course, but red flags that go up can be frustration, pushback, arriving late to meetings, etc." (Camerlo)

2. The sales rep deflects questions and becomes defensive.

"I remember where we lost a solid veteran of five years after a dismal few months, and he became very good at deflecting questions and focus the last few months of his tenure. A constant deflection was put up by him, and he was great at deflecting to relieve pressure off of the data points that at the time mattered the most, i.e., results and overall daily performance!" (Camerlo)

"Your rep's requests for help/guidance are turning into excuses or desperate pleas, such as, 'I can't make my quota unless I get this from you.' " (McMillan)

3. The salesperson becomes disengaged.

"An ISR who's burning out is going to have a considerable drop in their level of engagement: with you, with the company, and with their team. Again, this comes from their overall feeling of being burned out. They're either tired of doing the job or they're tired of who they're doing it for. Whichever the answer, it's going to show up in their attitude." (Snell)

"The rep will miss 'buying signals' and keep talking rather than asking the person to take the next forward step or place the order. The listen-talk ratio, which ought to be about 70/30, evens out or reverses." (Brown)

4. The sales rep's verbal delivery becomes sloppy and lackluster.

"They sound bored on the phone...you can hear the boredom" (Damphousse)

"Inside sales is an audio activity, so the burnout signs often are audible first. For example: 1) Inflection decreases; pronunciation and enunciation become less accurate. 2) Modulation suffers: variations in pitch and pace diminish and you may hear a repetitious boredom instead. 3) Speech affectations show up: 'y'know,' 'like,' 'no problem,' and such. (An inside rep recently called me 'dude!' Flattering, but no sale.)" (Brown)

5. The sales rep doesn't respond to incentives.

"If you are offering spiffs or special incentives (assuming they are worthwhile), yet see little change in behavior, your rep might be getting burned out." (McMillan)

6. Members of the team complain about a salesperson.

"As a sales manager, you can just smell it and see it. They mope. They complain about the product. The other sales reps make comments to you as a sales manager about this rep. In 2010 I had a rep who had over 10 years of experience and the reps to which he was tied to (who had 1-5 years of sales experience) were coming to me telling me that this guy needed a kick in the butt." (Gaither)

7. The salesperson consistently misses goals.

"After a run of consistently hitting goal, missing goal (usually coupled with excuses that didn't exist before). This happened to one of my reps in 2010, and I had to let her go and now she's doing well in outside sales for a men's magazine publisher." (Gaither)

"When an ISR is getting burned out, they're going to show that in their performance. Whether they're a solid B player or they're one of your All-Stars, this is a common theme among ISR burnout. It shows up because they're not as invested as they used to be, and it shows up in their numbers. If your ISR team is comprised of folks that are doing lead-gen (only), it shows up in either drop in dials and/or drop in qualified leads passed. If your ISR team is closing business, it shows up in fewer deals closed along with the drop in dials. The bottom line on this one, though, is that the drop in overall production is the number one sign." (Snell)

"Dials per day drops more than 20 percent for more than a couple days in a row (everyone has a bad day once in a while)." (Dampousse)

"It's easy to track trends in most CRM tools these days, and you can see fairly quickly that you need to take corrective action. Self-correction usually doesn't tend to work. Good management and good mentoring or motivational speeches only go so far!" (Camerlo)

8. The sale's rep is no longer managing his/her time productively.

"They're showing up late for work, not on time for meetings, not following up with prospects, etc. A burned out ISR is going to have a noticeable drop in their time management skills. They don't care as much as they used to, and that shows up in their lack of care for their time." (Snell)

"They stop coming in early or staying late if that was their pattern. They start disappearing midday for 'doctor's appointments' (interviews)." (Dampousse)

"Excessive sick days or coming in late: I once had a guy who was a top producer at hotjobs.com who came to work for me and he was 'sick' so often that we almost had to let him go for job abandonment." (Gaither)

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