

# STRONG

ANNA  
GLYNN

How the best sales leaders  
engage, achieve, and thrive

# Praise for STRONG

‘Simplicity is the real power of STRONG. Whilst many of the concepts within the book are not new, Anna has presented them in a simple yet meaningful way for anyone involved in sales (which is technically everyone!). With its foundations in positive psychology, this book provides readers with strategies to increase their team’s engagement, performance and productivity and enhance their own careers.’

—*Sam Tremethick, Chief Retail and Partnerships Officer, AIA Australia*

‘Anna says, “Sales leaders, your role is to support your people, help them grow and develop, and trust them to achieve what’s expected. You motivate, inspire, guide and coach them to be their best.” She’s right.

This outstanding book provides a recipe for leadership success described through stories that resonate, practical examples and easy-to-follow guidelines. STRONG is more than an acronym: Strengths, Trust and Psychological Safety, Resilience, Optimism, Networks, and Goals and Purpose are all key elements of success in building an environment where everyone thrives and sales success follows. STRONG is an essential read for all leaders, particularly those leading sales teams.’

—*Ron Hooton, CEO, Vision Australia*

‘STRONG is a must-read for every sales leader looking to improve team performance and create a thriving, high-performing workplace culture. Anna’s storytelling, supported by evidence-based strategies, is refreshingly easy to absorb and keeps us craving the next chapter. The STRONG principles combine the key attributes that sales leaders and teams can adopt to improve results significantly. I highly recommend this book to all sales leaders wanting to shift the performance dial in the right direction!’

—*Rob Joyes, State Chief Executive-  
Victoria, Colliers International*

‘Leadership can be hard, but leading an underperforming sales team is one of the toughest gigs to find yourself in. Is it you, your team, or your organisation that needs to change, and how? STRONG is full of hacks on where to look for answers and practical tips to flip you from struggling to thriving. Anna has beautifully woven many of today’s most prominent concepts and theories from the genres of leadership and peak performance, saving you valuable time so that you can immediately start becoming a stronger sales leader.’

—*Brad Fox, Managing Director,  
SmartBrave Consulting*

‘As a sales book, STRONG is a completely different read. Rather than focusing on skill, process and productivity, it gets you thinking about how the whole team performs and how your ability as a leader can directly affect your team’s

success. Focusing on leadership rather than the team, leaves us wanting to know more and to learn how to create and keep successful sales teams. STRONG over SWOT – find the positive and focus on the strengths.’

—*David Colman, Director, PRD*

‘An intelligent yet simplified mix of experience, research, science and collective wisdom synthesised in the cleverly chosen acronym STRONG. This framework supports sales leaders to identify areas of focus and attention, and to rise to new levels of engagement, accomplishment and repeatable success, or as the book describes – to thrive. Even successful leaders can use the concepts described and address the challenges captured within the stories. I found myself motivated by the ideas.’

—*Peter Gommers, Senior Leader, Financial Services*

‘This book is exactly what we need to excel at selling today. STRONG challenges traditional thinking by focusing on what unlocks our sales potential. You’ll learn that results come through honing people skills, not just mastering scripts or following protocols, and discover the power of tapping into individual and collective motivations as the key to enhancing performance. In this new era of selling, where being human is a superpower, STRONG provides the intel to improve leadership and sales results at all levels. Sales doesn’t feel so hard when you look at it from this perspective.’

—*Kim Payne, speaker, trainer and coach*

‘For leaders wanting to impact performance and see their teams thrive in challenging environments, STRONG provides a solid starting point. With off-field skills impacting results as much as technical sales techniques, STRONG has a footing in research that shows the cost and opportunity of attending to these skills. Much will resonate with seasoned sales leaders. Anna’s book includes easily applied frameworks, exercises and tools that detail the range of STRONG principles. New leaders will recognise what makes a high performing team and have practical tools to accelerate their leadership success. Presented in an accessible, easy-to-read format, the STRONG principles are an excellent guide for any sales leader.’

—*Tamara Joyner, Regional Vice President Sales*

‘Sales leaders will enjoy STRONG. It’s concise, well-structured and research-based, reinforcing the principles and providing confidence that this approach will work. New managers will benefit from this book as a source to rely on. For those more experienced, it’s a good reminder of the areas they should focus on but may have been forgotten. The book outlines practical strategies to implement, which makes it really easy for sales leaders to apply and take action immediately. STRONG is a great framework to plan your sales year and continue to use to check in and ensure you’re still on track.’

—*Eric Fransella, Enterprise Account Executive, Zendesk*

‘STRONG is the book I needed 12 years ago when the opportunity to lead sales people presented itself. Fortunately for you, it’s here. Leading energy-driven deal hunters is like navigating a maze with no map. STRONG gives you the tools you require, the confidence that “you can do this” and the conviction that “you’re doing it right and doing right by the people you lead”.’

—*Tom Hayes, Senior Director, CBRE*



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ANNA  
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How the best sales leaders  
engage, achieve and thrive

Published by Anna Glynn

First published in 2024 in Melbourne, Australia

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Edited by Jenny Magee

Typeset and printed in Australia by BookPOD

ISBN: 978-0-9756490-0-8 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-0-9756490-1-5 (ebook)

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*Being a salesperson isn't just something to do;  
it's someone to be.*



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has not been written alone. Many amazing people have supported me along the way.

Thank you to my book coach, Kelly Irving, for her early guidance and support on the book structure and the Expert Author Community for providing advice. Thank you to Jenny Magee for her brilliant editing, and Sylvie Blair and the BookPOD team for their production and publishing expertise.

I am grateful for the Thought Leaders Business School community, who inspire and encourage me to achieve what I never thought possible.

My thanks to David Colman, Brad Fox, Eric Fransella, Peter Gommers, Tom Hayes, Ron Hooton, Tamara Joyner, Kim Payne and Sam Tremethick who provided input and feedback on early iterations, and all the other sales leaders who regularly let me pick their brains.

Thank you to Michelle McQuaid and Paige Williams, two incredible mentors, who challenge me to expand and whose work and thinking I admire.



Thank you to the incredible researchers on whose shoulders this book stands. These include Ed Deci, Jane Dutton, Amy Edmondson, BJ Fogg, Barbara Fredrickson, Alex Linley, Ann Masten, Marie-Gabrielle Reed, Richard Ryan, Peter Schulman, Marty Seligman and Mike Steger. The list goes on and includes all those from whom I have learned in the positive psychology community.

Thank you to my clients. I have tested these strategies on them and their stories are captured in this book. I have learnt so much from them.

Finally, thank you to Rob and Tommy, who support, encourage, love and believe in me – there's no better feeling in the world!

# PREFACE

I am fortunate to have spent a large part of my life in sales.

I dipped my toe into this wonderful world by selling homemade goods from the side of the road with my best friend. At eight years of age, we convinced passers-by that a jar of water with a lavender twig was the latest perfume they absolutely had to have.

Many years later, fresh out of university, I landed my first corporate role in sales, an area that just seemed to fit. My education never taught me about sales, yet I found myself doing work that felt great. I loved (and still do) the excitement of engaging with prospects, the sense of achievement when you hit your targets and developing and delivering products and services to meet a client's needs.

Whilst on the front-line, I learnt the *101* of selling – how to prospect, negotiate, listen, influence, identify decision-makers, communicate, close, deal with multiple stakeholders, problem-solve, understand buyer preferences, develop strategy, and build relationships.

As I did well as an individual contributor, I was eventually put into a management position. Yet, perhaps, like you, I had no idea what to do as a team leader. Suddenly, I was

responsible for motivating, inspiring and leading my team to deliver (if not exceed) our goals. On top of that, I was in charge of increasing their engagement and looking after their wellbeing. No small feat!

Although I'd attended many incredible training programs over the years and been guided by some excellent mentors and coaches, I felt neither equipped nor confident to deliver what was expected of me. All the sales competencies I had learned couldn't help me overcome my challenges and lead my team to success.

I devoured books, case studies, articles and interviews – anything to build my understanding of what drove workplace engagement, resilience, wellbeing and performance. Organisations had existed for centuries, so surely the answers existed somewhere.

During my research, I discovered positive psychology, which focuses on what leads to thriving people, teams, workplaces, communities and societies. I couldn't believe there was a whole field trying to find answers to everything I wanted to know!

Fortunately, the Centre for Wellbeing Science at the University of Melbourne offers courses and degrees in this space. So, I embarked on a graduate diploma, where I gained new skills and strategies that I tested out with my team. And I saw great results – not just on our scorecards

but in our relationships with one another, our motivation, energy and commitment.

I was having an impact, so my confidence to lead grew, even though some of what I was doing differed from how I was led and how my organisation was influencing me to lead. But these new strategies felt right, so I continued.

As the benefits of the positive psychology approach became increasingly obvious, I became hooked on the field and wanted to learn as much as I could. So, a few years later, I signed up for the Masters of Applied Positive Psychology program at Melbourne University.

During my study, I recognised that I was learning everything organisations needed and wanted to know, but it wasn't being taught to leaders or their teams. I decided to launch my own practice, where I could share these strategies with workplaces so they, too, could achieve the outcomes they were after.

Fast forward to today, and I am grateful to work with organisations from all different sectors around the world, sharing what I know and continuing to learn with leaders and their teams. In the simplest terms, I teach everything I wish I had known when I was leading.

My hope in doing this work is that organisations become places where workers can be at their best each day, where

they are better for having worked there, where burnout isn't the norm, and where we all achieve more and thrive.

This book captures some of my deepest learning about how to be an outstanding sales leader. These lessons have come from academic studies, yet they've also been shared in interviews with leaders running exceptional sales teams. They've also come from my work testing these strategies with individuals.

My hope is that this book gives other sales leaders the confidence to lead their teams to deeper engagement and impact so they can attain better results and move closer towards thriving in this increasingly complex and ever-changing world.

# INTRODUCTION

*Nothing happens until a sale is made*

– Thomas Watson Snr.

Sales teams are the backbone of every business.

It's incredibly hard for an organisation to survive if they don't hit their targets. And because of this, sales teams are under enormous pressure to deliver.

Yet despite the importance of the role, sales doesn't have an honourable image. You don't hear children saying they want to be a salesperson when they grow up! In his book *To Sell is Human*, Daniel Pink even described sales as the '*white-collar equivalent of cleaning toilets*'.<sup>1</sup> *Ouch!*

Many outsiders mistake the long lunches, client conferences, mid-week dinners and coffee catchups as fun. And sure, some fun does come with the territory, but it's hard work, too. Often really hard work. Much of the effort put in with prospects, sometimes over months or even years, doesn't result in a sale.

It's even harder for sales leaders. They're under pressure to ensure their team delivers as they're ultimately responsible for their teams' performance and success. Yet it's becoming harder to be a successful sales leader, given the growing complexity and challenge of their role. Clients and teams are demanding more from them, the workplace is changing faster than ever, and there is mounting pressure to perform.

Sales teams are exhausted and flailing, and the strategies sales leaders have traditionally used to motivate and engage

How they lead  
today won't  
get them  
where they  
need to go.

their teams aren't working. Leaders don't always admit it, but how they lead today won't get them where they need to go.

Even though they might be achieving some reasonable outcomes now, these aren't sustainable over the long-term.

Their concern is that sales will get harder before they get easier. As their confidence dips, these leaders are beginning to feel they're not cut out for the job. They're questioning whether they're good enough to lead their teams to success and calculating the risks if they don't. That's because, in sales, it's pretty basic; you either hit your targets and know you've done a good job. Or you miss your targets, and you've done a bad job. As a sales leader, missing your targets by a lot might mean no job.

Given all this, it's no wonder many sales leaders are at breaking point. They're tired, frustrated and struggling. They're at risk of burnout – if they're not there already.

The good news, however, is that some sales leaders are doing well, really well, amidst the struggles. They are accomplishing exactly what we all want as leaders. They've taken their leadership to the next level by switching to evidence-backed techniques. They are confident about what needs to be done to engage, achieve and thrive over the long term.

Rather than trying to manage their teams to deliver results using punishments or rewards, they've created an environment where people can do their best work. They and their teams are satisfied, connected, and committed. They take ownership of their performance, cope well with challenges and put in more effort with their colleagues and clients. These teams have a competitive edge and are attractive to talent. And because they're flourishing at work, their personal lives are positively impacted, which is why they are considered the best.

## Who is this book for?

This book is for leaders in sales – specifically, five distinct types of sales leaders, although the ideas and strategies will be helpful to all.



The first type are great at sales and great at leading. These leaders excelled as individual contributors during their many years in the field, so naturally, they were promoted and given a sales team to lead. They intuitively do a lot of the things captured in this book. So, they're good sales leaders, but they're not really sure why. If you ask them how they lead, they can't explain and nor can they teach their strategies to others. We want more sales teams like theirs, but the leader doesn't fully understand what they're doing. These leaders need to learn what they're doing and how to teach it to their teams and others.

Next is the leader who is great at sales but terrible at leading. They've been in sales for most, if not all, their careers. Before becoming a leader, they proved they were able to sell successfully. They know how to handle negotiations and knockbacks better than anyone. They show their teams all the ins and outs of selling. Technically, they're brilliant, but they lack many of the skills required to lead their teams to be their best. They're excellent salespeople but, unfortunately, not great leaders.

The third is those who are great at sales but new to leading. They have made the transition from salesperson to manager, which isn't natural for most people. Yet they received little or no leadership training, so they lack the critical skills to manage a team. They have no idea how to recruit, lead, motivate or engage their workers. They feel totally lost as leaders and aren't sure what they should be doing. They see

other leaders and their teams doing well and want to learn their strategies.

The fourth group includes leaders who are not great at sales but are impressive at leading. Like the first group, they naturally adopt the strategies in this book and are good sales leaders, but they're not sure what they're doing - even though their team is doing well. They want to learn what they're doing and how to teach it to others.

And finally, there are the sales leaders who don't realise they're in sales. These are all the people who are selling every day but don't consider themselves to be in sales. They may be lawyers, architects, teachers, doctors, accountants, relationship managers or engineers. They're in sales because, in some way, shape or form, their role is to influence or persuade someone to do business with them. They might be on stage encouraging people to change, writing articles, or improving lives or businesses through their expertise. They have something others need, and there's an exchange of value for that. But they don't believe that they *sell* or they are in *sales*. But they are because, as Daniel Pink said, 'to sell is human'.

It's important to point out that when I refer to leadership, it isn't necessarily about someone's title or the number of direct reports they have. Leadership is something we can all choose to do. It's a decision. Even if you aren't in an official management position, you can still be a leader, and this book is for you.

Regardless of your title or which group you identify with, this book will give you the confidence to unleash potential within yourself and your team and create environments where all can thrive.

## About this book

By now, you're probably keen to understand what will unfold in the coming pages, so here's an overview of what lies ahead.

Part One examines the challenges facing sales leaders and their teams and why these impede success. We will also make the case for why sales leadership needs to change.

In Part Two, we take a deep dive into evidence-backed strategies that boost engagement, wellbeing, resilience and performance at work. We will uncover why they're necessary for sales leaders to adopt and how they can be actioned.

And finally, Part Three will reveal how we can ensure the changes we want to make will be successful and how to amplify the outcomes we wish to see.

## How to use this book

As you work your way through the chapters, you'll encounter stories from the frontline (with names changed)

and learn the evidence-backed strategies that empower sales teams to thrive.

I promise you won't be learning yet another sales methodology or technique.

By the end, you'll have the latest science at your fingertips and you'll be armed with a suite of tools you can apply immediately with your team.

But more than that, you'll have learned more about yourself and your leadership.

By switching to the evidence-backed strategies captured in these pages, you will lead better, do better and be better. Just imagine the impact of this on you and everyone around you. Not only will you have better salespeople, but you'll have better humans, too.

However, good science is never proven. We are always learning more. So, I ask that you experiment with the ideas within this book. Let them test and challenge you. Pull them apart, test them out and see what works best for you and your team.

Let's get started!

Not only  
will you  
have better  
salespeople,  
but you'll  
have better  
humans, too.



# PART 1



## CHAPTER ONE

# THE CHALLENGES OF SALES LEADERS

The world we find ourselves in poses unique and greater challenges than we've ever endured. These hurdles make it increasingly difficult for sales leaders to achieve exceptional outcomes or, in some cases, even the bare minimum.

Regardless of the industry or the size or location of the company, sales leaders are dealing with largely the same challenges.

Most sales leaders I speak with say their biggest current challenge is the retention and attraction of talent. This is backed up by reports from PricewaterhouseCoopers and Development Dimensions International's 2023 CEO Leadership Report.<sup>1, 2</sup> These leaders say they're finding it

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and attraction  
of talent.



really tough to recruit quality talent and are working harder than ever to keep their star performers.

Attrition is costly for any team, but a salesperson's turnover is even more so. In addition to the normal costs of non-sales roles, turnover hurts sales teams even more because whilst the roles sit empty or aren't replaced, existing client relationships aren't nurtured or are even neglected. When your salespeople leave, this can kill customer retention. So staff turnover is expensive, sometimes as much as four times the salesperson's pay.<sup>3</sup>

What's more, a sales team's budget typically continues its trajectory each year despite losing head count. When teams don't have adequate resources (people) to meet the demands of their jobs or their workplace requires too much of them, they can feel worn out, leading to burnout.<sup>4</sup> This is worrying because sales teams are being asked to do more with less. That includes people, money and time, particularly whenever there's a looming economic downturn.

Gallup suggests that higher demands on workers could also be contributing to the decrease in engagement seen in Australia and around the world.<sup>5</sup> Employee engagement is a significant driver of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, so the fallout from this trend is costly. Gallup also estimates that staff disengagement costs \$3,400 out of every \$10,000 worth of salary paid.<sup>6</sup> What's more, employee engagement directly impacts an employee's performance.<sup>7</sup>

Given that 70% of team engagement is attributable to the leader, it's an area in glaring need of fixing.<sup>8</sup>

Sales teams are asking more of their leaders; they want greater flexibility in their role, their wellbeing looked after and for leaders to foster the teams' sense of purpose.<sup>9</sup>

In all, the people side of the sales leader's role is becoming more difficult as they look for ways to engage and motivate their teams to achieve results and develop the next generation of salespeople.

Sales leaders are under increased pressure to perform. This comes from their own leaders as well as from the CEO and the board, as the company's success rests on the sales team delivering on their KPIs.

Pressure is also stemming from the continued disruption that is present in the market. The business environment is ever-changing and continues to evolve at an unprecedented pace. Constant fluctuations in interest rates, technology advancements, and unexpected emerging competitors are causing much angst for those in sales.

Customer preferences and expectations are constantly shifting and increasing. They want more from their products or services, yet they want to spend less and are willing to go

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elsewhere to get what they want. It's taking a lot more effort and time to get deals over the line and the pace to close is slowing.

What's more, it's hard to escape the pressure as it's felt in their personal lives too. With the cost of living increasing, sales leaders are under significant stress at home as their families' livelihoods also rely on their success. So, the pressure is coming from several different directions and can't be avoided.

Given the challenges, it's no wonder sales stress is at an all-time high. Many salespeople are exhausted, seriously struggling or burning out. Sales teams aren't convinced

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on the line.

they can deliver on their KPIs against such a tough backdrop. The stress they're experiencing also hurts their performance and productivity. As a result, they become more disengaged, demotivated, and dissatisfied with their roles. It's not surprising that many are actively seeking new jobs.<sup>10</sup>

These challenges are making it hard for sales leaders to do their job. Their confidence to support their teams to overcome these hurdles and achieve what's expected is dipping.

They're unsure how to lead their teams to success, yet if they don't succeed, their jobs, reputations, careers and livelihoods are on the line.

## Why aren't sales leaders ready to overcome these challenges?

Training and development should be a strategic imperative in every workplace. Many organisations know this and spend a lot of time and money on training their teams – particularly their sales divisions.

According to the Association for Talent Development, workplaces invest, on average, over US\$1000 to US\$1500 per year per salesperson on sales training.<sup>11</sup> That amounts to more than US\$100 billion each year.<sup>12</sup> However, sales training typically focuses on the basics of *how* to sell.<sup>13</sup> These include handling objections, making calls, influencing, building pipelines, negotiating, listening, communicating, stakeholder management, buyer preferences and relationship building.

These factors build a salesperson's aptitude – just what they need when they go out and sell.

Often, this training teaches the latest sales methodology that promises to make a salesperson successful. It might be SPIN selling (Situation, Problem, Implication, Need-payoff), needs-based selling, barrier selling, psychological

selling, mood selling, customer-centric selling, solution selling, or (my favourite) the science in selling, where you observe the shape of your prospect's skull to learn more about their character.<sup>14</sup>

No sales  
methodology  
has proved  
more  
successful  
than any  
other.

Yet despite the plethora of options, no sales methodology has proved more successful than any other in defeating challenges and boosting sales performance. And they aren't typically aimed at driving team engagement, resilience or wellbeing.

Don't get me wrong, a sales methodology absolutely has a place in sales training, particularly for those who might be new to the role, and you can always learn something to add to your sales toolkit. But rarely does sales training teach everything else that sales leaders and their people need to know so they can thrive. For instance, these programs don't typically teach people how to overcome hurdles, be at their best or build a team that retains and attracts the best sales talent.

## What about leadership training?

In addition to annual sales training, most organisations spend much of their budget on leadership training.

Like sales methodologies, leadership training also tends to focus on the latest management theory (servant, courageous, transformational, authentic, ethical, etc.) that offers fresh ideas on how best to lead a team. But what's taught isn't always effective as it fails to translate into the workplace. Leadership theories lack evidence or do not equate with the results we're after.

It's hard to know which management theory or style is best for our current challenges. Which will help us be more engaged or create cultures that attract quality talent. Most training programs are off-the-shelf, so they're not always the right fit for a team. And some are rarely updated, so they don't address current or immediate issues.

Yet some organisations don't provide leadership training to their employees at all. They don't invest in their leaders because they believe that being an effective individual contributor means they can manage their teams effectively.

Leadership theories lack evidence or do not equate with the results we're after.

Leadership  
requires a set  
of learned  
skills.

Yet the skills required to be a good salesperson are not the same as being a good or even great sales leader. Some think that people should be able to lead based on instinct. But it isn't something we're born with; leadership requires a set

of learned skills and many leaders long for instruction on which approach to follow.

What's more, not upskilling leaders can have disastrous effects on teams.

Of course, learning how to lead doesn't just come from the classroom; we can gain experience from other leaders around us. But their approaches might not resonate with you. Nor deliver the outcomes you seek.

Trained or not, many sales leaders aren't (or don't feel) equipped with the critical capabilities and skills to survive and thrive in this world.

## Summary

- Sales teams are one of the most important divisions of organisations.
- Sales leaders are ultimately responsible for the success of their teams.
- The challenges of sales leaders have never been greater or more difficult.
- Many sales leaders aren't confident and have not been properly trained to lead their teams to success.





## CHAPTER TWO

# MIND THE GAP

Sales leaders and researchers have long been interested in how to improve results, given how important this is for organisations to survive. Over the decades, some answers have emerged.

Positive psychology, in particular, has uncovered how to boost engagement, resilience, wellbeing and performance and prevent workplace burnout. These strategies include playing to strengths, adopting a growth mindset, being optimistic, understanding purpose, building high-quality connections and being resilient. These approaches lead individuals, teams and organisations to reach their goals and more.

In sport we would call these the *'off-field'* factors, the activities focused on that help players to be better *'on-field'*. This is the work that is done when no

How to *be* a salesperson, as opposed to how to *do* sales.

one is watching. They're about how to *be* a salesperson, as opposed to how to *do* sales, that help us to achieve greater results that can be sustained over the long term. Here, we are talking about adopting the right mindset, using our internal resources like strengths to bring out our best, or our coping skills to overcome hurdles. Or developing great relationships that can support us in good and bad times. Or how you stay motivated to achieve your goals in an increasingly difficult environment. These are the skills that deliver 'on-field' success.

We've seen plenty of examples of organisations achieving success by focusing on these strategies. In the corporate sector, these include Xero, KPMG, Accenture, Swisse, Vision Australia, Medibank Private, Australia Post, McDonald's, PEXA, NSW Ambulance, and Bendigo and Adelaide Bank. We've also seen sporting teams achieve more by adopting these principles, including the Richmond Football Club, the Matildas, Cricket Australia and Melbourne Victory. And our children are learning these principles at school, too.

Yet, despite being known and shown to work, these strategies haven't yet been fully incorporated into the sales arena. These skills aren't typically featured as a fundamental component of sales training and they're not found in the sales literature. Nor do they feature heavily on conference agendas.

Perhaps these skills have been (or still are) considered ‘soft’ because they focus somewhat on people being happier and healthier. Maybe they require more effort and time to adapt. Or they may go against traditional command-and-control leadership styles.

So, we need to close the gap between what research has uncovered and what’s being done by sales leaders. We need a different approach. Something that works to end rising disengagement, stress and burnout, and equips sales leaders to lead their teams to success.

When sales leaders update their skills, they create conditions for better engagement, resilience, performance and wellbeing. The priority remains and will always be on long-term sustainable results; we’re just changing the strategies used to get there.

We need  
a different  
approach.

## What happens when this change is made?

We’ve accepted the need for change. What happens when this change is made? And how does it show up in your work?

To understand that, I’ve developed the ladder in Figure 1, outlining the five typical states salespeople experience from burning out to thriving.

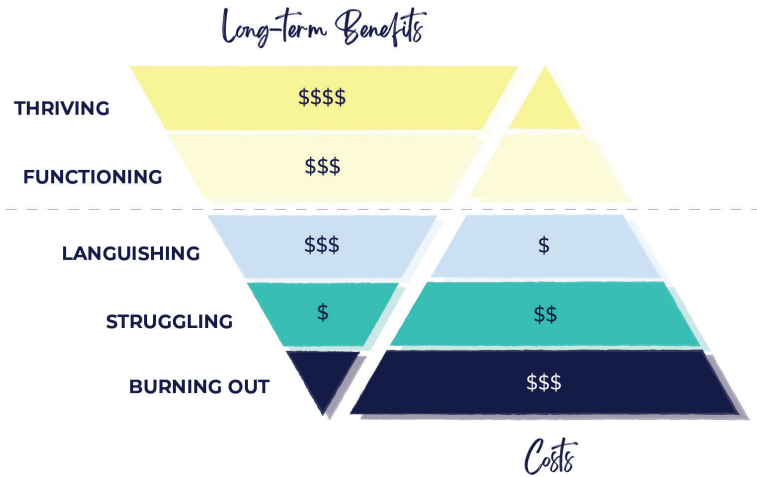


Figure 1: Burning out to Thriving ladder

Over half of our teams are operating above the line.

My research indicates that over half of our teams are operating above the line, either *functioning* or *thriving*.

These teams have leaders who are confidently leading their teams to success. They do whatever it takes to keep their teams above the line. These leaders greatly impact everyone around them, and their teams look to them for the behaviours they should adopt and how they should approach things. They ensure that their teams are engaged and motivated, experience time in flow, have a strong understanding of their purpose, have high-quality team relationships and have strategies to cope with challenges.

Because of this, these teams have lifted their average. They perform better and achieve more. They're more engaged, with greater resilience, increased wellbeing, less stress, burnout and turnover. Their work strengthens rather than depletes them. As a result, they're more satisfied with their roles and more committed to their workplace.

Given the state of their teams and the workplace culture, the leaders are more energised and motivated and less exhausted and stressed. They receive positive feedback from their teams and their leaders, reinforcing their approach. The organisation is pleased as the team outcomes directly impact the bottom line. There are fewer sick days and compensation claims and greater productivity and performance. There is lower turnover and the organisation is more attractive to quality talent. These leaders are admired within their workplace and their industry. They make it look easy and others want to learn from them. They are role models because they have achieved what others want.

Leaders who feel good and function well take this home with them. When they're at their best, this positively impacts their families and their communities.

If more than half of teams are above the line, that leaves just under half languishing, struggling or at burnout. These teams are typically led by leaders who aren't confident in their approach. They know where their teams are but aren't

sure how to help them improve. Their efforts have minimal impact, as they use old management techniques that aren't creating change. They're ignoring the off-field factors.

As a result, their teams struggle to focus on what's important. They're less motivated and engaged due to the increased stress they're experiencing, which impacts their performance and productivity. They scramble to complete tasks, typically make more mistakes and have more accidents. They're not equipped to cope well with the challenges that arise, so they feel exhausted. Those feelings negatively impact their relationships at work and provide little connection to their organisation's purpose. Because of this, they become cynical about work and even consider leaving their roles. Emotions spread like wildfire, so if a few team members feel this way, it can quickly spread throughout entire teams.

Teams that operate below the line experience greater stress, less engagement, decreased wellbeing and resilience; as a result, they see more burnout and turnover. The organisation's reputation can suffer if these challenges are known externally.

Reflecting team morale, leaders are highly stressed about what the future holds and feel lost and depleted. There's not a lot of benefit from operating here – apart from, of course, the opportunity to improve.

In the short term, it can be argued that you can still achieve your KPIs when you're operating below the line, but that is not sustainable over the long term. Chances are, even though you are performing well, you'll be exhausted, stressed, and on the path to burnout. And this will impact those around you, including your loved ones.

## Why is there so much focus on leaders?

I've written this book for sales leaders because they impact their teams more than any other factor. Leaders influence team productivity, the ability to deliver on outcomes and the capacity to thrive.

Your role is to support your people, help them grow and develop, and trust them to achieve what's expected. You motivate, inspire, guide and coach them to be their best. When interviewing people in sales, I ask who their sales idols are. The majority mention their current or previous leader. Learning from that person had a far greater impact on their development than any sales training they had been on. Are you that person for someone?

Workers look to their leaders for mentorship, for examples

When leaders set a great example, teams are more likely to follow and do well.



of how to approach particular scenarios and what to do in their day-to-day. When leaders set a great example, teams are more likely to follow and do well. Remember that you shape the experience your people have at work. If you micromanage teams, pit them against one another, or belittle or distrust them, they won't have a good experience or quality relationship with you, which may encourage them to leave. Poor leadership is often cited as one of the main drivers of turnover.<sup>1</sup>

Organisations need leaders to set the tone for the behaviours they wish to see. You are the first step in engineering the culture they want. When you act in a way that is not aligned with your team or organisation's values, this sends a clear message that this isn't important.

Ultimately, salespeople with exceptional leaders are engaged, achieve more and thrive.

## Where are you at?

Now that we've described how leaders and teams experience and impact each other, it's time to find out where you are at.

- Where would you place yourself on the 'Burning out to Thriving' ladder?
- Where are most of your team? Is this different from you? Why?
- What are the long-term benefits and costs of this?

- Where do you want to be?
- Where do you want your team to be?

Please know that the aim isn't to have your whole team consistently thriving. That isn't achievable, given the constant challenges in our professional and personal lives. What's more, our emotional state ebbs and flows depending on what's happening around us. Thriving isn't the final destination; it's an ongoing journey.

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The goal here is to give sales leaders tools so they and their teams can thrive. That means they are equipped with strategies for when things aren't going so well.

Don't just guess what state your team is in. Research and experience tell us we're not very good at reading other people's minds. We usually get it wrong. So, if you're unsure where your team is at, the best thing you can do is ask.

If you're in a better position than your team, this may be due to the greater autonomy and flexibility that comes with a leadership role.

If your team is higher on the ladder than you are, this might reflect the increased pressure and challenges you face. This

can make it harder for the team to thrive over the long term. The flight risk for the team is higher, given that people tend to leave jobs because of their leader.

These questions may have uncovered a gap between where you and your team are and where you want to be. The next part of this book will outline strategies to help you close that gap.

However, you may have discovered that you and your team are in the right place. The next part of the book will remind and inspire you of all the great ways you are leading your team.

Please remember that your and your team's position will change depending on what's happening in your world, so it's important to keep taking stock.

## Summary

- There is a gap between what research has uncovered that leads to greater wellbeing, engagement, resilience, and performance at work and what is being applied in organisations.
- Sales leaders who focus on on-field and off-field factors have teams that operate above the line.
- Sales leaders who don't emphasise the off-field are more likely to have teams sitting below the line.
- The focus as a start needs to be on sales leaders, given their massive influence on their team's success.

## How do sales leaders succeed in today's world?

It's becoming harder to be a successful sales leader. You must attract and retain top performers and motivate and engage your teams to deliver, if not exceed, their goals in a tough market. After all, company success rests on your team's ability to achieve their KPIs. As a sales leader, you have more impact on your people than any other factor, which adds to the pressure.

**STRONG** explores the intersection of sales leadership research and positive psychology, identifying key principles to amplify impact, achieve greater results and thrive. Evidence-based lessons are interwoven with stories, examples and actionable insights. All of which offers a fresh perspective that supports sales leaders and their teams to:

- attract and retain the best sales talent
- handle pressure and challenging environments
- achieve long-term sustainable performance.



Anna Glynn is a speaker, author, and coach with a deep understanding of sales and positive psychology. She works with a range of global organisations to create environments where people can be at their best every day.

