

Top 3 Reasons to  
**MOVE THE MIDDLE**



**Are you paying enough attention to  
your mid-level performers?**



# Organizations treat most of their salespeople like **MIDDLE CHILDREN**



Only a few superstars receive the golden child treatment. Executives and managers dote on these top performers. They're showered with accolades. Win every competition. Invited to the Chairman's Club. And are always surrounded by adoring fans.

Then, there's the problem children. Most of them are new kids on the block. They have yet to hit any goals. Managers spend every waking moment coaching and prodding them. And they spend more time in training classes than in the field.

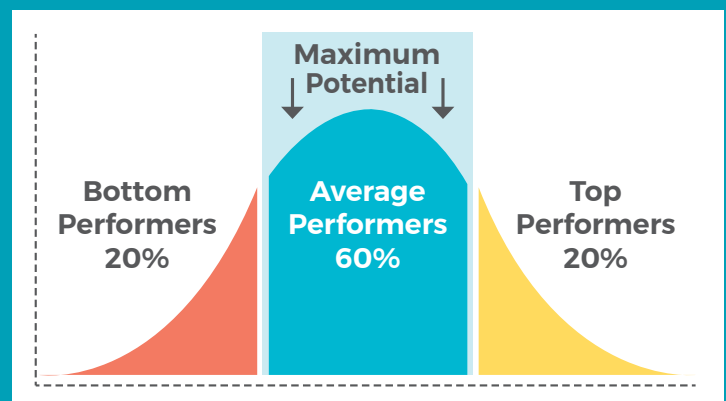
Finally, there's the mid-level performers. Sales managers don't really expect them ever to be top guns. But they do deliver some decent business, and they do the job every single day. So, like most middle children, they're basically ignored. They don't get recognized because they're not bringing in the big bucks. But they also don't need to be disciplined since they are doing what's expected.

## Virtually every company can divide their sales force into a bell curve

**20% are top performers**

**60% are those middle children who get the least amount of attention**

**20% are bottom performers**

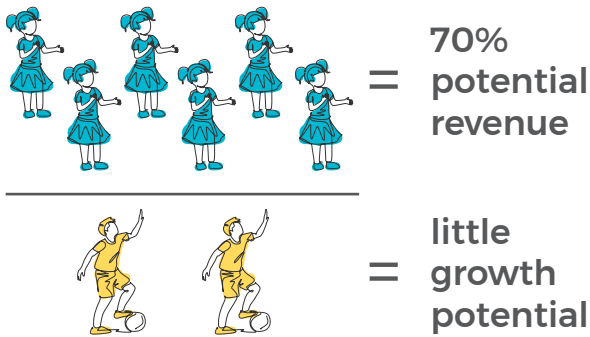


Firms dedicate enormous time and resources into improving the lowest performers. Many are new to the business, and some will one day be megastars. It takes an investment in time and training to help them grow or to determine they're not suited for the role and encourage them to try something new.

Competitors are always trying to recruit your top performers. If you aren't showing them the love, they're going to move onto greener pastures.

With all the time and effort going to the whiz kids and newbies, there's little time left to encourage the majority of your people to perform. Just remember this ... people who are ignored seldom do their best.

1 A 5% improvement in your mid-level performers will generate **70% more revenue** than the same improvement from top performers<sup>1</sup>.

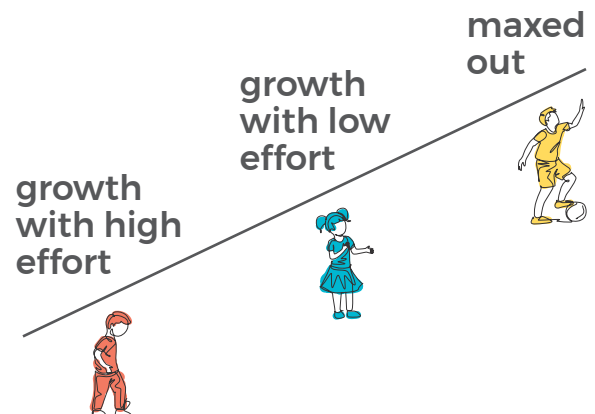


At first this may seem counterintuitive. The 80/20 rule or Pareto Principle indicates that 80% of the consequences come from 20% of the causes. Many people try to apply this same principle to individuals in sales. But research by the Sales Executive Council (SEC) found the top 20% of salespeople in a company usually account for about 1/3 of the total revenues, and seldom count for more than 40% of the total. This is why a small percentage increase by mid-level performers far outpaces the same increase from a firm's top 20%.

<sup>1</sup>Sales Executive Council "Shifting the Performance Curve - Exporting High-Performance Sales Disciplines to the Core"

2 It is usually **more difficult** for top performers to generate incremental growth.

Because of their success, top performers often find incremental sales growth extremely difficult. They already receive the highest share of business their existing customers can offer. So, any rapid growth is restricted by their customer's capabilities. They can seek new customers, but this is a much longer process than gaining more volume from those already buying from them. It is, however, very important to retain the substantial revenues these top performers generate. Recognizing the success of your top performers is a retention strategy designed to reward and maintain their volume.



3 Low performers require **significant time and attention**.



The people in the bottom 15% - 20% of performers are either new to the organization or unsuited for their position. New people represent the future. They require training and coaching to reach their full potential. Those who are failing also require significant time either to coach them on improving or going through what for many organizations is a rather lengthy process to discharge them.

Your mid-level performers are already delivering results. They know your business and are most likely to generate incremental growth fastest. Paying more attention to these middle children and creating programs to reward them for their individual growth will bring enormous success for only a modest investment. Some might even move into your top performers group with the extra recognition and rewards.