

WHAT THE NFL CAN TEACH YOU ABOUT YOUR INSIDE SALES TEAM

By Mike Brooks



Every so often, a person comes along who profoundly changes his or her field of study. Louis Pasteur changed the world of medicine by introducing germ theory. Thomas Edison changed our world through the use of electricity. Albert Einstein changed modern physics. Steve Jobs changed the world of computing. And Paul Brown changed NFL football, turning it into the game it is today.

Initially, American football resembled a rugby match, with a tangle of big men grappling around a line of scrimmage. As the game evolved, especially with the introduction of the forward pass, the game became not only more interesting but also bewilderingly complex. It took Paul Brown, a gifted visionary possessing extraordinary drive and talent, to develop and exploit the sport's possibilities.

I've been using the same techniques Paul used while building championship football teams to build multimillion-dollar inside sales teams—and they work. Now I'll offer you some quotes from the book *The*

Best Game Ever by Mark Bowden. Mark explains some of Paul's football techniques; after each quote, I'll show you how they apply to building your inside sales team as well.

First of all, Paul's techniques were highly successful. His high school coaching record was 80-8-2, with seven of those losses coming in the early years. After serving in World War II, he was hired to coach Ohio State's football team and won a national title. He then coached the Cleveland Browns of the American Athletic Football Conference (AAFC), a new pro league. The league operated for four years—and Brown's team won the championship all four times!

The Cleveland Browns were so good that they outdrew the Cleveland Rams of the NFL, who fled to Los Angeles. The Browns then joined the NFL. Everyone said they were from a minor league, until the Browns won the NFL title in the first year! They then played in the championship game (i.e., the Super Bowl) for the next five straight years, winning two more times.

Here's how Paul Brown succeeded, according to *The Best Game Ever*:

"Brown did it not just with masterful strategy, but with a ruthlessly efficient system of assessing and acquiring talent, and a level of organization and discipline entirely new to the game. He stunned his players by regimenting every aspect of their lives. They were given playbooks with descriptions and diagrams of every play, and after studying them in classrooms, they were forced to spend hours at night copying them out by hand in their own notebooks, which were collected and graded."

"Some players learn by hearing it," explained Charley Winner, who worked as a scout for Cleveland during those years and later helped implement Brown's system in Baltimore. "Other players learn by watching you draw it up on a blackboard. Other players learn by seeing it, so we show them the film. Others learn by walking through it on the practice field. Others learn by drawing it out themselves by hand. We covered all the learning methods, so when we were through, by God, they knew it."

 **Here's how we translate this system into building an inside sales**

team: We start by identifying and scripting a "Defined Sales Process" for your company. This includes in-depth descriptions and diagrams of every selling situation your reps encounter in your sale.

 **Then we script out the best practice responses** to these selling situations so that your reps are completely prepared to succeed every time they're on the phone with a prospect or client. Next, we train your reps on these best practices via classroom training, recording calls, role playing, and even recording the scripts on an MP3 player and providing them to your reps to listen to over and over, so we cover all the learning methods. By God, your reps will all know what to do!





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Next comes the coaching, developing, and evaluation of your talent. Here is what Weeb Ewbank brought over to the Baltimore Colts. Weeb, one of Brown’s assistants, was hired away by the Baltimore Colts. He was a faithful disciple of the Paul Brown/Cleveland system, which he helped run for five years. Some of you might know him as the head coach of the New York Jets (yes, the Joe Namath, Super Bowl Champion Jets!).

MORE FROM THE BEST GAME EVER:

“Weeb arrived in Baltimore with a bang. He boldly promised an NFL championship in just five seasons. Putting the Cleveland grading system in place, he began assessing players on a scale numbered zero through five. Zero meant a missed assignment. If you knew what to do and didn’t do it, that was a one. If you got a lot of ones, that meant you knew what to do, you just weren’t good enough to do it.

“If you got a two, it meant you knew what to do and you did an average job. Three meant you knew what to do and did it well. Once in a while, a player would do something truly remarkable and earn a four. Fives were exceedingly rare. Players would earn a five maybe once or twice in a season. Those who scored zeroes and ones were soon pursuing other lines of work, and in time Weeb weeded out players who scored a lot of twos.”

Don’t you just love that grading system? Here’s how we apply this approach to building your inside sales team: we build a “Script Grading Adherence Form” that your managers use to measure and grade how well your reps are doing what it takes to be successful. This is one

of the most important parts of the entire team-building process, and it’s often completely lacking in most companies. By accessing talent and finding out who has what it takes (and who should be pursuing a different line of work), you can very quickly build a highly successful inside sales team. **N**

Mike Brooks is founder and principal of Mr. Inside Sales, a Los Angeles-based inside sales consulting and training firm. Mike has been voted one of the most influential inside sales professionals for two years in a row by The American Association of Inside Sales Professionals, and is the recognized authority in the industry.

Mike is hired by business owners to develop and implement proven sales processes that help them immediately scale and grow multimillion-dollar inside sales teams. He also offers customized sales training programs, works as a virtual V.P. of Sales, and offers executive coaching programs to business owners around the world. For more information, visit his website, www.MrInsideSales.com.

