



10 Steps To Successful Sales Training

Hi

I hope you are keeping well?

Two weeks ago I received a phone call from a manager who works for a sales company in the UK.

He asked me for ways of how to improve his sales force through training.

No great shakes there I thought...

But then he went on to describe to me how his company was implementing their sales training and it suddenly dawned on me as to the reasons why their investment was not paying off.

They were making some fundamental mistakes in the ways that they were organising and running their sales training events.

So, after the call, I sat down and wrote the following article to help you with your sales training too!

Here we go....

Ten Steps To Make Sure Your Sales Training Works!

How do you make sure your salespeople are trained effectively and make it a meaningful learning experience for all concerned?

Think of the following elements as building blocks, as the ten keys to sales training success.

They should be kept in mind when planning and implementing any sales training program that you run:

1. Comprehensive
2. Customised
3. Relevant
4. Performance oriented
5. Motivational
6. Modular
7. Easy to test and measure
8. Interactive
9. Cost effective
10. Embraced by top management

Block 1. Sales training should be comprehensive

It should provide, to the greatest extent possible, a total solution encompassing not only specific product sales-related courses, but it should also provide:

* An overall plan, based on broad, fundamental and explicitly stated goals. Obviously, you must think about what you want your salespeople to actually learn. However, try to think what kind of salespeople you want them to become through the training.

* Here are two examples:

- "Our salespeople will create the sort of buying experience that will encourage loyalty from our existing customers and increased purchase intention from our prospects"

- "Our salespeople will assume a more professional behaviour when addressing customer needs, thus creating higher levels of customer trust and confidence. The impact of this effort will be measured and monitored through our customer viewpoint surveys."

* An assessment tool to ensure that salespeople who are enrolled in the program are properly placed. While the your overall recruiting process is the first screening mechanism for bringing people into sales, closer and more accurate evaluation provided within the sales training system could reveal that an individual is better suited to another staff position.

* A tracking system to monitor progress and measure post-training increases.

* A follow-up agenda to provide reinforcement, as well as additional mentoring and coaching, as needed.

* An ongoing plan for continued development, to ensure that all relevant additional or revised information about your products, marketplace, competition, etc. is quickly assimilated into learning for your salespeople.

Block 2 - Sales training should be customised

It should develop logically out of the dynamics of the specific sales environment in which your salespeople work. To accomplish this, all training should be designed to meet the unique requirements of your company. It should be carefully matched to individual needs, limitations and prerequisites.

Ask what the training programme will cover before your salesperson attends. Discuss the subjects with the salesperson to determine which sections will be most relevant and what questions need to be answered. Ensure the salesperson knows what the objectives of the training are, so that they can customize some of the materials to their own needs.

Block 3 - Sales training should be relevant

It should introduce opportunities for your salespeople to acquire and practice skills in a protected and supportive atmosphere that parallels their real world job responsibilities.

This means that case studies (customer scenarios) should be used extensively. Case studies should, of course, reflect realistic customer environments and interactions, including both successes and failures. If it's a retail course, ensure the activities will assist your salespeople to develop the retail skills they need for your franchise. If it's a business-oriented course, find out what the activities will enable your salespeople to accomplish.

Block 4 - Sales training should be performance oriented

It should build "bridges" and connect to the real world:

- * Before training, discuss with the salesperson how it will fit in with their job-related performance objectives. This should dictate the appropriateness of sales training content, learning activities, and instructional methodology.
- * During training, get the salesperson to make sure they use structured techniques for applying knowledge through the use of skill-based practice activities, such as group discussions, planning exercises and role playing.
- * After training, make sure salespeople are put in touch with relevant information sources, given job aids, provided with structured coaching/mentoring, taken on joint sales calls with more experienced personnel, etc. This ensures the application and transfer of knowledge and skills to the job.

Block 5 - Sales training should be motivational

All training should inspire enthusiasm by focusing on need-to-know information, presented in sufficient depth to impart both confidence and competence to the salesperson.

When presented in a workshop format, sales training should be conducted by dynamic, experienced facilitators who possess a dependable knowledge of the products or services being sold, a realistic and up-to-date understanding of the selling environment, and expertise

in moderating learning sessions for adults.

In other words, good sales training recognises that time spent in training is time away from direct sales activities; therefore, it makes efficient and best use of salespeople's time and energy.

Block 6 - Sales training should be modular

All sales training should fit together and should be composed of stand-alone (although related) modules.

These allow your salespeople to complete only those portions of sales training that are most closely connected to their own specific requirements.

To minimise the time that salespeople will have to spend away from sales, training should be designed to be as concise as realistically feasible.

Block 7 - Sales training should be easy to test and measure

It should allow salespeople to "test out" the parts of the training that target information or skills they already have mastered.

It should also require them to complete only those portions of sales training related to their most pressing areas of need.

You can do this by checking what they learned during your review sessions with them, and then applying the follow up methods discussed in Block 1.

Block 8 - Sales training should be interactive

It should consist of workshops, seminars, peer discussion groups, and similar types of interactive activities that allow for the maximum exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences among participants.

Block 9 - Sales training should be cost effective

It should be designed to maximise the organisation's investment in training, achieving your company's key goals with the lowest possible cost per participant.

When calculating costs of training, preview what the salesperson will be able to do in, say, six months.

Then determine the costs of manufacturer training courses, coaching, mentoring, distance learning and other forms of development over that time period and equate the overall investment against desired returns.

That way, you can convince your boss that the training budget will be well spent.

Block 10 - Sales training should be embraced by top management

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It should have solid management backing, in order to ensure that all learning ideas and principles are adequately supported.

Remember, salespeople will immediately know the real culture of the company if they are told that they are to go on a training course simply to 'tick a box'.

Get the Manager to discuss with the salesperson what they learned on the course and how their development is important to the company.

It will only take a few minutes but will show how important the role of training is in the company.

Without this, the salesperson will have the belief that their development is not really important to you, and they are not worth investing in.

**** The final cement mix ****

These keys hold true regardless of who is providing sales training. Here are some percentages from Training Magazine detailing who is providing sales training in organisations with more than 100 employees:

- 24 percent of training provided by in-house staff only
- 14 percent of training provided by outside suppliers only
- 62 percent of training provided by both

So consider how you can give yourself the best possible opportunities to help your salespeople's development have a firm foundation.

These blocks should help you build a great team spirit and create a positive learning culture within your department.

Like always if you would like help on any aspect of your business please feel free to drop us a line with what you need help on and then my team and I can let you know what we could do for you.

All the best

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