

# 3 Questions to Ask Before Investing in Sales Training



# Table of Contents

<u>Chapter 1</u>	What are the benefits and why do we need it?
<u>Chapter 2</u>	Are we invested?
<u>Chapter 3</u>	How can we make sure the training is worthwhile?

# What are the benefits and why do we need it?

If your company has been making excuses for too long and essentially punishing its profits, as well as its workers, it's time for change. Realizing the importance of educating and training employees and then actually implementing effective programs is the only way to long term company success.

*So why does your company need training? What are its true benefits?*

## **Improved Performance**

Employee education and training is designed to give your people the proficiency and tools they need to learn new skills and refresh old ones. It's key in every industry to stay on top of new trends, timesaving technologies, and how to stay competitive. Providing training will make sure the entire team is fully competent and can help you set clear expectations with regards to new goals. Whether the company's output is struggling or already doing a stellar job, training will only help to increase its performance further and deliver a great return on investment.

## **Higher Engagement**

It's no secret that unhappy, disengaged, and uninspired employees can eventually become less productive. Ensuring employee happiness with appropriate benefits and perks is only one part of the formula. Keeping them truly engaged by cultivating their specific skills further, as well as, providing education in the areas where they aim to improve, will increase their interest in their work and new projects.





## Higher Retention Rates

Re-engaging employees through training will improve their overall job performance and satisfaction. They'll be less likely to let their eyes wander for other career opportunities since they've increased their skill level and hopefully intend to conquer new challenges. Investing in your company's employees helps to show them their value, potential expertise, and the company's focus on maintaining a long-term relationship with them. Having higher retention rates will decrease the huge costs often involved in employee turnover. Making the small additional effort to train your current employees will save your company the headache of later trying to replace them.

## Cohesive Onboarding

If your company has been expanding and adding to its staff then you're probably already familiar with the difficult task of getting new members up to speed. If not done properly, you may later experience unforeseen problems and confusion. Thinking ahead and providing onboarding training to your newest employees will help eliminate future turbulence due to unclear expectations and potentially unfamiliar methods. It will also convey the company's desire to engage with and improve upon the skills new workers bring to the table.





## **Elimination of the Skills Gap**

Some companies are having trouble finding the right people to fill open positions. Closing the skills gap is something that your company can do with training. Whether there's a current employee who has shown incredible potential and just needs some more knowledge to transition into the open position, or a prospective hire that's promising if it wasn't for their minor lack in a certain area, why shouldn't you just train them? It's unrealistic to believe that if you've already been waiting for months, that if you just wait a little bit longer, the perfect, ideal, absolutely spectacular candidate will come along. That's not to say you should lower your standards, but accepting that you will most likely have to teach anyone coming into the role a thing or two, why should you contribute to the growth of the skills gap if you could just rectify the situation and start training?

## **Reduction of Skill Fade**

Do you remember everything you've ever learned? Of course not. Even the most dedicated and skilled employees will eventually start losing grasp of things they learned decades, years, months, weeks, or even days before. Having regular training sessions or better yet - ongoing training - will help reduce the previously inescapable skill fade-out phenomenon. Reinforcing previously learned material will ensure employees are always current with the knowledge and continue to increase their performance.



## Why do your sellers need training?

### **Selling is a “performance” art.**

The core objective of selling is to cause a person to take an action that he/she might not have taken without the salesperson in the picture. Sales is the collective art of presentation, persuasion, negotiation, and closing. In each of those areas, success is predicated on how effectively each is performed. Training is nothing more than refining the quality of what needs to be performed. That refinement is simply impossible without well directed training in place.

### **Salespeople are performers.**

No one takes serious issue with that statement, but how many people will readily acknowledge that all performers, in any field or endeavor, need to be trained? Professional football players go to training camp before the start of every season. In spite of their prior experience and success, management requires *every* member of the team to train on the fundamentals, as well as, advanced skills that it will take to be successful in the upcoming campaign.

### **Performers need to train and practice in a controlled and organized environment.**

Expecting or asking a salesperson to “train on their own” simply diminishes any chance of success. On your next trip to the gym, check out the difference between those working out on their own and those who are working out with personal trainers. Typically, there’s an obvious contrast in terms of focus, technique, and yes, results. The same applies to a sales team. Training together under the direction and guidance of a high quality trainer or coach simply accelerates the growth and development of everyone!



## **The need for solid sales training never goes away!**

"Experienced" salespeople often push back about ongoing sales training. Many senior salespeople have a "been there, done that" attitude that has more to do with ego than common sense. Lumberjacks, no matter how long they have been in the woods, sharpen their saws every day. A dull saw is simply not as productive as a sharp one. Every seller's collective skills need constant sharpening regardless of how long they've been selling. It's really as simple as that.

## **So is sales training "optional" or a "luxury"?**

Neither, it's simply essential for creating a successful sales organization. Let's make it happen and reap the benefits! The cost of not training is simply a risk not worth taking.





# Are We Invested?

## Chapter 2

In order for training to be successful, we need to be fully invested and hold ourselves, and our team accountable.

### **Almost all sales managers are required to play multiple roles, but which one is most important?**

Assuming that every duty and task carries the same weight doesn't recognize that some are more critical for success than others. In addition, it becomes incredibly easy to get bogged down in an endless morass of activities that don't maximize the sales manager's effectiveness.

### **"Making the numbers" is simply not enough!**

Solely focusing on the obvious goals of generating revenue and making budgets ignores the deeper contribution that a sales manager should be making to his/her company. Most sales managers were once salespeople who performed at a high level, making their own numbers on a pretty consistent basis. *So it's no surprise that "singular" mindset tends to carry over with sales managers.* By nature, people tend to keep on doing what they do best.

### **The big first step is moving from "I" to "we".**

Sales managers are charged with the performance and results of not just themselves, but all the members of their respective sales team. It's a big and sometimes difficult switch to caring about the collective as opposed to individual good. Sales managers are infamous for "taking over" a given sale in progress instead of letting their salesperson carry the ball to the close. It's a new sales manager's knee-jerk reaction to do what always worked for them. But taking over does absolutely nothing to develop the salesperson assigned to that given account.







### **A successful team typically has a successful coach!**

Pick a sport, and the teams that win on a consistent basis usually have terrific coaches who lead the way! It's true in sports and it's true in sales. *A sales manager's most important role is to be an effective coach for his/her team.* And if a sales manager isn't predisposed to becoming a great coach, then he/she should think seriously about returning to being a successful salesperson instead. Sales managers have a serious obligation to their team to coach each and every member to a higher and more effective performance level.

### **Effective coaching takes guts, patience, and focus!**

Coaches must both praise and criticize team members and work with them on improvement of specific skills and abilities. It's painstaking, time consuming, and sometimes frustrating work. Communicating clearly and effectively on big issues and small details are both parts of the job. Coaching a sales team means coming up with a different solution for every member of the team...one size doesn't necessarily fit all in terms of coaching. Great coaches know the critical differences between each team member and operate accordingly.

## **Effective coaching is critical when the game is changing!**

Digital technology is disrupting sales operations across a wide array of businesses. Sales managers who can guide their teams through a rapidly evolving landscape must be adept at coaching. While the playbook may be different, the fundamentals of selling still must be instilled in every salesperson. Coaches must also convey perspective and clarity to the situation at hand. The best teams are more than confident that their coaches will never let them down!

## **Coaches also need coaching.**

Since most companies don't offer formal training for sales managers, it's often necessary for a sales manager to seek out someone to be his/her coach. It should be a person that they want to emulate and someone who has demonstrated how to be a successful coach.

**So embrace the conviction and make the commitment to be a great sales manager by becoming a great coach!**



# How can we make sure the training is worthwhile?

## Chapter 3

We need to measure what's important and make sure we specify key performance indicators that need to improve!

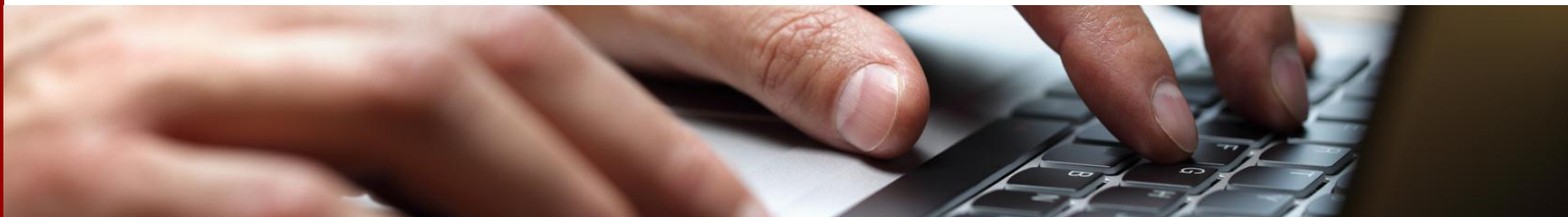
It's amazing that despite how many CRMs exist, we still don't really take full advantage of them. Some of us don't use them at all, or simply pile in "data" after the fact. Some of us use them what seems like constantly, but it all simply turns into a big black hole of a database that no one's really looking at or analyzing properly. As a sales manager, conducting a sales meeting with your sellers should be about the actual numbers. The bottom line is something you're already intensely aware of, but *what else should you be keeping track of?*

### Prospecting

How many calls are your sellers making? How many emails are they sending out? What's the strategy behind what they're doing? How many of these initial points of contact turn into actual leads? Making sure your sellers are keeping track of these numbers and noticing any trends that occur will help them manage their time more efficiently. When you stay on top of what's going on with your sellers' prospecting, you'll be able to better spot warning signs and help guide them before their pipeline goes awry.

### First Appointments

How many first appointments do your sellers have each week? How many of these first appointments were generated through the seller's own prospecting? How many of the leads for first appointments came in through marketing? How many of these first appointments have a follow-up scheduled? The more quality first appointments your sellers have, the higher their potential for closing actual deals. Determining an average number of first appointments a seller should have each week, will help establish a range of what they should be striving for, as well as ensuring they're on track to effectively close as many deals as possible.







### **Sales Cycle**

How is your company's sales cycle set up? How many opportunities does each seller have in every stage of the pipeline at any given time? Ensuring each seller's pipeline is filled with the right proportion of opportunities in each stage is vital in helping to guarantee deals will be closing on a regular basis with no dry spells in between.

### **Time to Close**

What is the time frame for each sale? How many days from a first appointment does an average deal take to close? If sellers only focus on first appointments, but not on other stages of their pipeline, the time to close can get infinitely drawn-out. When they learn to stay on top of how long an average deal takes to close and aim to reduce it, they become better equipped to rule out deals that have gone beyond the acceptable date range and are far less likely to close.

### **Forecasting Accuracy**

Being mindful of all the above measurements will naturally help increase forecasting accuracy. When your sellers, and you as their manager, are more aware of the numbers behind each opportunity, instead of relying on anecdotes or gut-feelings, forecasting sales will become a bit more intuitive and systematic.



## Ratios

In addition to having solid data on prospecting, first appointments, the overall sales cycle, and time to close - sellers should know their ratios. For example, what's the average number of calls or emails it would take to get a first appointment that would then get a next step? What's the ratio of first appointments to actual deals closed? Keeping your sellers focused on their numbers will help them improve and allow you to manage them with clearer direction.

Whatever method you're using to track your sales team's activities - be it an intricate CRM or a more basic spreadsheet - make sure you're measuring more than just the bottom line. Keeping your salespeople accountable for all their numbers will make them more effective, as well as help you guide them more conclusively.

Tracking the actual numbers will allow you to more easily see the progress and impact of training. Read more in the eBook - [Measuring the Effectiveness of Sales Training](#).

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