

Strategic Sales Training - Defining Your Desired Outcome for the Training

In our last article we discussed some key steps in the development of your sales training program:

1. Customizing the training you choose to your people and your market;
2. Defining your desired outcome for the training;
3. Interviewing and selecting the training program; and
4. Defining your plan for ongoing success and reinforcement of the training.

We also discussed how the sales strategy work you have accomplished prior to this stage lays the foundation for your sales training program. In other words, the first step above, customizing your training to your people and your market, is accomplished through the sales strategy and the training of the sales strategy to your sales team. This part of the training can only be accomplished by you. An outside sales training company, offering standard training services, will not be able to train your staff on your strategy. An outside consulting firm may, but pure consultants are typically not equipped trainers. If you hire a firm that provides all these services – strategy development, recruitment of new staff, and customized training curriculum – it will be able to facilitate such training. If not, you will have to write and facilitate the training program on your own.

When putting together training, ensure that it has the following minimum components:

- ∴ Training outline
- ∴ Training curriculum – the actual course content
- ∴ Discussion and feedback sessions
- ∴ Training exercises that allow participants to practice or demonstrate understanding of the curriculum
- ∴ Quizzes, tests or some other type of individual knowledge checks for each key component of the program
- ∴ Group as well as individual action plans for implementation of the program
- ∴ A management and inspection plan to ensure the components of the strategy and the training are indeed executed

Once you have this scoped out, you are ready to write your curriculum, rollout plan, and reinforcement program.

This work provides the baseline from which to move to and finalize the component of **defining the desired outcome of the training**. This is critical irrespective of whether you are doing the training yourself or hiring a training company.

When developing your own training or hiring an outside training company, there are baseline requirements that help to ensure the training program's success. Below, we have provided a sample program outline. By following it, you will have the framework for establishing the training requirements. (The outline references several of our past articles; please refer to those as you progress through this outline.)

1. Sales strategy – training the staff on how the strategy was created. This is critical in establishing credibility and alignment. (Reference the sales strategy articles.)
 - a. Components of the sales strategy (recall there are several subcomponents – refer to the previous articles on this subject)
 - i. Careful plan or method
 - ii. Defining the market
 - iii. Product or service offerings to the market
 - iv. Alignment
2. Sales staffing – training the staff on how the traits/skills tie to the strategy and lead to the development of the roles and responsibilities. (Reference the sales staffing articles.) Training your staff on how you went about hiring them or, if they were already on board, how you went about defining their roles and responsibilities, will tie and tie later with what you expect of them and how you are going to inspect their results. Again, this is critical to alignment.
3. Sales training – training the staff on how you selected the training program, and the components to ensure acceptance. This also sets the stage for the next segment, stage 4 reinforcement.
4. Management or reinforcement program – training the staff on how you will inspect their implementation of the sales training going forward.

Laying all of this out and providing the relevant data to your staff will generate good questions, excitement towards the program, an understanding of how you arrived at your program contents, and lay the groundwork for your inspection. Taking the time to do this due diligence will greatly enhance alignment and therefore help you achieve your desired outcome.

We realize this is a lot of work and that most companies skip this step because of the time and work involved. However, consider the time and money wasted if your team does not buy into the program. The risk of skipping this step far outweighs the cost of doing it correctly.

You may be saying to yourself that you do not have the staff onboard to complete such a mission. That is okay; most companies do not. Instead of tossing out the training altogether, or diluting it to the point of ineffectiveness, hire a company with expertise in this area to do the training for you!

In the next article we will provide a list of considerations for interviewing and selecting training companies.

Until then...

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