

## **Strategic Sales Training – Defining Your Plan for Ongoing Success and Reinforcement of Training**

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In our last article we discussed ten points of consideration for choosing an outside sales training company. We concluded that article with a critical component of any successful training: the reinforcement of that training program to ensure long-term results. Because of the importance reinforcement plays in training, this article will spend more time on that subject.

First, let's define reinforcement. **Reinforcement** occurs when an event following a response causes an increase in the probability of that response occurring in the future.

The key to this definition is “causes an increase in the probability of that response occurring in the future.” Training reinforcement is a method to help increase the probability that, in the future (post training), those being trained will behave as trained.

How do we encourage this increase in probability? Well, over the years we have found there are several components to successful reinforcement programs. Some of these are outlined below.

1. Sales training skills have to be part of the overall sales strategy! That is, you have to train people with the skills to execute the strategy. To have a strategy that is separate from the training makes no sense.
2. People being trained need to have the ability to execute the skills on which they are being trained. Remember, in the series of articles on hiring we discussed the use of tests in the screening process? The reason for using tests is so you do not expect someone to do something he or she is incapable of doing. For example, I am 5' 8" with a very low vertical jump. Hiring me to dunk a basketball in the NBA would be a set-up for failure. The same is true for salespeople: hiring a salesperson with an IQ that is too low to execute a complex sales strategy is setting both of you up for failure. So hire correctly based on the skills you will need these employees to execute.
3. Training needs to be real-life and effective. I joked about widget training in a previous article. You must train people using the skills and products/services you are looking to sell in the markets/industries you are looking to sell in; you need use real-life examples, not ivory tower ineffective mumbo jumbo.

Assuming you train the staff on the strategy, the staff is able to execute that strategy (they have the appropriate skill set), and you train them effectively using real-life scenarios customized to your product/service, market/industry, and people – reinforcement should be a piece of cake!

### **It all boils down to inspection and coaching...**

Inspection and coaching is simple if you have the right process in place to execute it.

Some components of a successful reinforcement program would be:

1. One-on-one planning / coaching sessions;
2. Sales meetings;
3. Field rides;
4. Quarterly and annual reviews; and,
5. Supplemental training days at regular intervals.

In summary, to effectively reinforce your training, you need to: train on the strategy, have the right salespeople, train them using real-life scenarios, and have a process in place to inspect and coach at regular intervals and provide feedback and measurements that assess sales representative development.

If you follow these suggestions, the “probability” of your staff demonstrating the desired behaviors increases exponentially.

In our next article we will discuss “best practices” found in many successful sales training programs.

Until then...

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