

## Strategic Sales Training - “Best Practices”

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Our last article discussed the importance of inspection and reinforcement of your training program to ensure adoption and ongoing success. In this article we capulate some “best practices” found in many successful sales training programs.

Some sales training “best practices” are:

- ✓ Involve the trainees in the development of the training curriculum and the methods of facilitation. Involving the trainees makes the content and processes “theirs” and therefore encourages greater adoption rates.
- ✓ Use a variety of delivery methods. Reading PowerPoint slides all day or even for 30 minutes can lead to disengagement of the trainees. Combine different delivery methods, such as:
  - **Flip charts.** The more the merrier! Post them all over the training room and refer to them throughout the training.
  - **Group discussions.** Remember, training is about the trainee – not the trainer. So, engage in group discussions as often as possible, but make sure to maintain control and direction, as group discussions can easily take a trainer off point.
  - **Breakout groups.** This is a terrific technique to use to generate customizable content for tools or action items coming out of the training. Plus, breaking into smaller groups encourages collaboration and adoption of the material. You cannot go wrong with breakout groups! Just stick to your timeframes and deliverables coming out of them!
  - **Demonstrations.** Once you train on a particular skill, it is important for the trainer to mirror or demonstrate that skill to the trainees so they can conceptualize its application. This leads into the next delivery method, role-plays.
  - **Role-plays.** Role-plays are critical to adoption of any new skill being trained on. This is the opportunity for trainees to practice, in a controlled environment, the skill they just learned and saw mirrored in the demonstration. Each skill should have a role-play component in order for the trainees to make the connection to their day-to-day application of the skill, while also taking into consideration individual style differences.

- **Personal action plans.** It is critical that at the conclusion of the training the trainee has an action plan for immediate implementation or execution of the skills learned in the training session. The quicker this happens (ideally, within 24-48 hours) the better the adoption rate. So, have each trainee provide a SMART goal of implementation of each skill; have him/her write it down and turn a copy into the person responsible for inspection. This will drive home the fact that the training has value and the new skill is now an expectation.
- Any other training delivery methods that contribute to interaction, practice and adoption!

These training aids, if used properly, will not allow participant drift.

- ✓ One final point: use examples of real-life scenarios at all times. There is nothing worse than the old widget example mentioned in the previous article. To the extent you do not use real-life examples, the trainees will be unable to make those all-important “connections” between the content and its application in the field.

We sincerely hope you enjoyed this series of articles on sales training. In our next series we will discuss the components of a successful reinforcement program to ensure the strategy, the people, the training, and the management program align completely for the ongoing success of the program.

Until then. . .

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