Increase Sales Knowledge With Modern Training

Content

Executive Summary

You need consistent sales rep performance to create a scalable revenue engine. Training sales reps in a way that leads to real improvements, and consistent and repeatable revenue performance, is one of the hardest challenges for sales leaders today.

The problem with most sales playbooks, training, and coaching is that they are not helping sellers have more impactful and effective customer conversations that ultimately convert opportunities into revenue. Today's sales leaders are looking for a better approach. Traditional curriculum-based sales training programs, like role-playing and most forms of sales coaching, aren't designed for the way sales reps learn and don't accurately represent real-world selling scenarios. So, the training ends up being abstract and the knowledge isn't retained.

This eBook looks at why traditional sales training is not working, which learning and knowledge-sharing solutions create lasting performance improvements, and how effective sales enablement solutions support how salespeople learn in real-time scenarios.

"US companies spend $20 billion per year on sales training (an average of $1,459 per salesperson) but it yields very low to no improvement in revenue results."

American Society of Training and Development

"B2B sales reps will forget 70% of the information they learn within a week of training, and 87% will forget it within a month."

Gartner

The Problem With Curriculum-Based Sales Training

Research on how individuals learn and remember knowledge shows that curriculum-based, instructor-led training is not the right approach. The format and distribution of sales training materials are obsolete because they are not tailored to specific selling circumstances and are not available to sellers at the time of customer interaction.

Today, selling is no longer seen as generic. It is highly customized to different consumer profiles, and industries, as well as customers' unique challenges and opportunities. The selling process must be tailored to the specific personas involved in the customer decision-making process, and sales training content must be delivered and accessible when sellers need it - when preparing on a plane or in the car immediately before a customer meeting, when online access via a VPN connection is not possible.

Telling salespeople exactly what to do via a sales playbook, in-person, or recorded training is not effective. And this approach cannot be remedied by automatically delivering sales training content via a learning management system either; the problem is in the training content itself. It is out of context and abstract. For successful sales learning, the training methodology, material, knowledge, and delivery must give the sales representative a self-guided approach to understanding the specifics.

Sales representatives must be educated in the context and cadence of how the buyer process works.

Context:
The combination of experiential learning and continual coaching enables sellers to be more effective, as long as it's embedded into the context of any actual selling scenario.

Cadence:
Skills training will be different depending on the specific customer being engaged, the complexity of the sale, and the understanding of where the customer is in their path-to-purchase process.

One Size Does Not Fit All

Personalizing training programs to an individual's learning style is the key to boosting your seller's customer interactions and helping them be more successful. Top-performing sales organizations adjust their learning programs to the changing dynamics of the market (competition), customers, and individual sale rep competencies.

> "Sales is a talent-based profession, and the best sales training will only improve the performance of an individual on average by as much as 20%."
>
> Salesforce

Effective sales training and coaching need to be customized to the individual and embedded in the actual selling process. When knowledge is applied in a real-world scenario at the exact moment when it's needed, it is processed and better retained by the brain.

% of companies that tailor learning programs for the sale steam

55%

35%

Out-performers   Slow growers
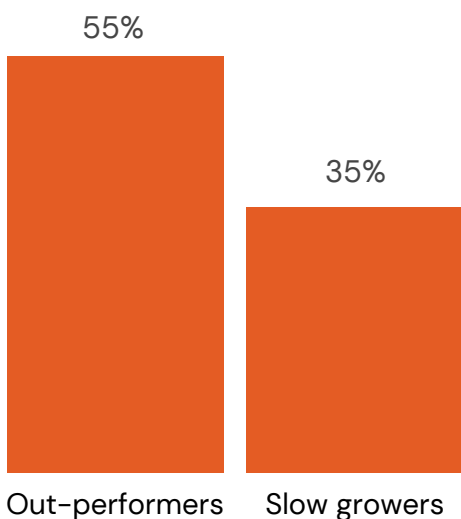
Companies where sales managers always tailor learning programs based on observed strengths are

1.3 times

more likely to be out-performers

McKinsey & Company

And while real-time coaching can be valuable, it is not truly embedded into the real-world sales process. Sellers tend to improve to a marginal degree and relying on this approach can keep the salesperson from processing and retaining knowledge, causing them to view the sales coach as a crutch. Although any salesperson that has been through a sales role-play exercise will tell you it's uncomfortable, unrealistic, and a waste of time because it doesn't represent a real-world selling scenario, it continues to be part of many sales training sessions.

"One of the most important things for a rep is to get them to self-assess. However, this can only happen if managers are asking them to do that and not immediately telling them what they should be doing."

Peter Ostrow VP/Research Director Forrester – Sales Enablement Strategies

Modern sales training is a process of continuous learning

Learning is continuous - we do it all the time. Providing ongoing learning to your team improves sales readiness by preparing sellers to effectively engage with knowledgeable B2B buyers across their entire customer journey. It will have longer-lasting effects than the curriculum-based or product training that occurs during a seller's onboarding, at an annual sales kick-off, during a quarterly business review event, or an hour-long course housed in a learning management system.

Embed microlearning into the process of selling

Time is sellers' most valuable resource and they have busy schedules. Therefore, they need to access the latest information on specific industry trends, customers, products, and services at their fingertips. Microlearning is more flexible and targeted than traditional learning strategies, and individuals can access information whenever they need it. Microlearning is available on-demand, with built-in capabilities for social learning (learning from expert peers), which enables a company to expand access to collective knowledge.

Unlike long, constantly interrupted courses, microlearning is an easily digestible, highly relevant "content unit" that is designed to meet the learning objective of a specific challenge in the sale engagement process. Microlearning is the ideal sales training since it provides sellers with just-in-time information that is relevant to the customer and is embedded into each stage of the buying journey. This also offers advantages in complex sales scenarios and consultative conversations with buyers, as sellers can access knowledge without having to leave their selling workflow process.
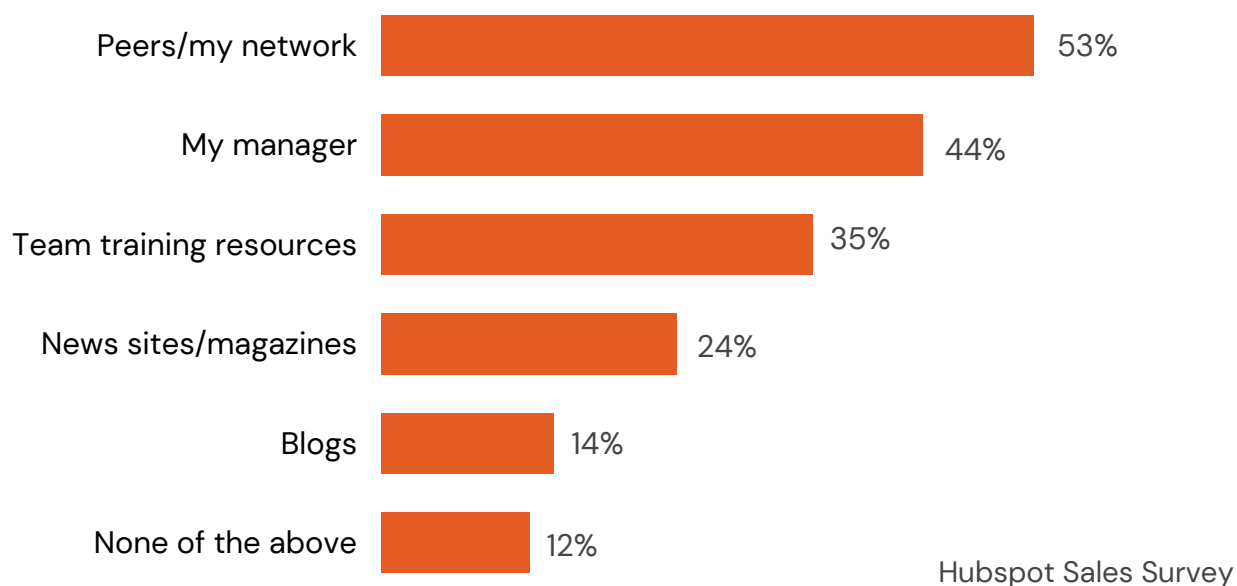
- **94% prefer microlearning to traditional eLearning courses, which are time-consuming and unproductive.**
- **Microlearning improves focus and supports long-term retention by up to 80%.**
- **Microlearning creates 50% more engagement by learners.**

Shift Learning

Social learning works best for digital native sellers

Social learning takes place through interactions that aim to share the knowledge of expert sellers in the group. Much of social learning happens through the instant messaging functionality in most CRM systems. Sellers ask questions to their peers to leverage the collective knowledge that exists within the sales team. However, the knowledge shared among the team is locked in this system.

Source	Percentage
Peers/my network	53%
My manager	44%
Team training resources	35%
News sites/magazines	24%
Blogs	14%
None of the above	12%

Hubspot Sales Survey

Through the advances in sales enablement technologies, organizations can easily capture and share the behaviors of top-performing sellers which improve customer engagement, opportunity conversion ratios, and sales rep quota attainment. An effective sales enablement solution collects information on which content and knowledge expert sellers consume during each stage in the selling process, which means sales leaders can understand trends and what works best for similar sales opportunities.

These data-driven insights can be automatically collected (in a passive manner) and proactively shared across the entire organization from an automated recommendation engine that suggests the best content, action, or offer to use at each selling stage for specific customer profiles, use-case challenges, selling scenarios, and buyer decision team personas.

TEG delivers customer insight, expert seller knowledge & learning that improves sales rep performance

With TEG you can:

- Prepare, train, and coach your sales organization, in a continuous way, that ensures they will be more effective in every customer interaction.
- Deliver training in a format that encourages learning.
- Speed up rep onboarding to reduce time to sales productivity – deliver the right content and expert knowledge to get sellers more effective in a shorter time.
- Asses and develop sales rep skills and ensure competency – continuously assess seller knowledge, certify skill proficiency, implement individual development/training paths, and track knowledge development (option term "progress" rather than development) over time.
- Share selling scenario best practices – share sales expert behavior data with managers and mentor sellers to replicate successful engagement.
- Ongoing coaching of reps across all stages of a customer's unique buying process.

TEG
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About TEG

The Enablement Group is your sales readiness and enablement partner. We deliver the sales performance outcomes your organization has been looking for by combining advisory services, learning, content, and sales tool creation with a technology delivery platform and program management.

We package the right training, expert knowledge, content, and selling tools that work best for engaging with specific customer profiles and buying personas at every stage in the selling process. Our sales engagement platform (open source, best of breed) automatically delivers it in the timeframe when it's needed - whenever seller-to-customer interactions happen (either on or offline).

Join TEG's Readiness Community: SOR Academy