

How to Ensure Training is Actually Improving Your Sales Organization

When you contemplate training your sales team, what typically comes to mind? Gathering new reps and sales managers in a hotel ballroom once a year to launch the company's latest offerings? Breakout sessions where third-party trainers tout the latest trends in successful sales thinking? How about lecture-style seminars on how to position product pricing and improve at cold calling? Maybe you envision a more digital approach, with quarterly online sales training programs, where each associate sits captive, in front of their laptop, watching video training modules with follow-up questions and assessments that "test learner knowledge".

If you're trying to achieve **long-term, sustainable improvement**, and bottom-line revenue growth from the exact same salesforce that fell short of goals last year, you may be going about training the wrong way. Let's first look at *why* we train professionals.

Mindset: When Failure Isn't an Option

When organizations talk about training, the thinking and dialog often centers around getting the sales team "aligned" or "upskilled" to sell. **Company culture** and **sales organization mindset** don't necessarily enter the conversation, but both not only impact customer *experience*, they also influence effective *sales performance* and translate as positive reviews; improved customer satisfaction scores (CSATs); achieved KPIs; and other measurable metrics.

Consider the approach to training strategy professional athletes take. Most pro athletes play for a season—or just a fraction of the year—but train consistently all year long. When they aren't putting on their pads, skates, or cleats to compete head-to-head, they are conditioning their bodies to withstand extremes, by working out daily, in the gym.

Pro athletes *continuously practice* their craft through repetitions many times what they would ever experience during a game or within a season. They advance to compete on a world stage because they embrace that, "learning how to do it" isn't enough. Every possible human deviation from absolute precision is constantly being trained out of them. They **over-prepare** because they know if they aren't at their best, they could lose a game, a season... and eventually, their job. Discipline alone won't keep a professional training at this level though, and most athletes will openly admit that it's as much about **conditioning their mindset** as it is honing their skills.

Similarly, special military forces and law enforcement tactical teams undergo daunting training exercises, in subhuman conditions, for weeks or months just to *learn* their craft, then train constantly thereafter between engagements. They do this to **raise the probability** that any scenario they encounter will end in the **best possible outcome**. They do it because it can save a life—maybe their own.

Create a Winning Environment

Granted, the stakes are higher in defense and pro sports environments, but are the objectives not the same? We want to enable our sales teams to be as prepared as possible, to **win under the toughest circumstances**. By approaching the sales training process as a *mindset* that begins at new hire onboarding; continues with learning and development via sales coaching; and is reinforced by providing enablement tools, embedding best practices, continually challenging sales performance, and holding team members accountable, we **create an environment** that helps ensure an “unfair” competitive advantage.

So, why do we provide annual “basic training”, then expect *quarterly* touchdowns? Rigor around **continuous improvement training programs** is a **performance enhancement approach** sales leaders can employ to *consistently* create conditions for sales teams to win more business *all year long*.

From Average to World Class

To build **fast, sustainable revenue growth**, we must stop training sales teams like they’re new recruits. Although perhaps challenging, it *is* possible to **motivate and lead** sales teams from average players to peak performers—though there may be some adjustment pains along the path to getting there.

Here are **Five Effective Sales Performance Elements** we’ve identified at **Motum**:

Empowerment

Identify the precise segment your team will pursue and **focus their efforts entirely** on that. Develop tools (playbook, content, templates, demos, support resources) that they can win with. If the conditions aren’t right, even world-class performers risk wins.

Accountability

Build in checks and balances throughout every step of the sales process to ensure error isn't possible. Doing so will get you 90% of the way there; closing the loop by seeking, implementing, and documenting feedback in a "living document" will get you the rest of the way.

Talent

Build a winning team. Every member of the team has the potential to be a winner. One client we worked with had a solid set of top-performing sales professionals, except for one... Mikey. Now, everybody liked Mikey. He worked hard at every task, created the most detailed presentation decks and was able to talk about the company and its solutions for hours. What Mikey didn't do well was win sales, so the sales leader knew better than to send Mikey out alone. Every sales team has at least one Mikey—someone who may be very personable, smart, and talented, but who's just not cut out to be a sales professional. There is, unfortunately, no place for Mikey on your winning team.

Practice

Practice and build in checkpoints. An ongoing "rehearse and review" system, where sales reps run role plays and gain actionable insights from feedback will up-level their sales skills to be the best they can be – and they'll feel it. Their boosted confidence will fuel a sense of urgency that's lightyears beyond how they're approaching their roles today.

One **Motum** client has instituted a continuous improvement program wherein every sales rep is on a perpetual performance plan that is reviewed with their leader each month. At all times, they know what they need to do to improve. As they work through problem areas, they're routinely tested by sales leaders at random. Everybody is expected to be at the top of their game at all times. Consequently, this company's sales team has gone from mediocre to the best in their industry in a very short time.

Another client conducts monthly review panels where sales professionals are expected to give 50-minute presentations on a solution of the panel's choosing. The presentations are video-taped and shared back with the presenter along with constructive feedback.

Feedback

Conduct post-mortems. Sales performance—both wins and losses—should be documented and analyzed by leaders. Next steps might include recommendations for specific training, changes to methodology, and identification of potential risks. These are then published to the entire team. Post-mortems can be synthesized by a sales enablement team to help define future training exercises and additional tools that may help the team win.

A Winning Sales Training Approach

No one enjoys expending company resources on failed sales cycles. Taking a closer look at your training rigor will ensure a consistent, positive outcome. Adjusting how you prepare and hold your sales team members accountable will help them grow personally and professionally, improve their skillset, and drive your sales performance into uncharted territory.

Need to define a plan that applies the **Five Effective Sales Performance Elements** within your own organization, or put a new **sales** or **continuous improvement program** in place? We can [help](#).

Motum is a market leader in revenue performance consulting, working with clients from large enterprises to entrepreneurial organizations across five continents to create sustainable revenue growth and develop an "unfair" competitive advantage for the long term. Please connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) and get services details at www.motum-us.com.