11 Sales Skills TO HELP YOU CROSS THE FINISH LINE

Just like in running, the skills you can improve in sales are many. So how do you know what will make the biggest difference to your results?

Our recent global study of **1,004 sellers and sales managers** uncovered 11 skills and behaviors that represent the largest skill gaps between Top Performers and The Rest.

Double down on the skills below to outpace your competition and cross the finish line first.

Top Performers Definition

	Seller	Sales Manager
Met Sales Goals	✓	✓
Challenging Sales Goals	✓	75%+ of team
Win Rate > 50%	✓	✓
Premium Pricing	✓	✓

1 Advanced Consultative Selling

21 Difference: Inspire buyers to reach out for ideas and advice.

This goes hand in hand with the #1 factor separating sales winners from second place finishers: educates buyers with new ideas and perspectives. Being seen as an authority, sharing thought leadership, and developing a trusted advisor relationship are great ways to differentiate yourself and inspire buyers to come to you.

Top Performers are 1.9x more likely to excel at inspiring buyers to reach out for ideas and advice.

2 Focus

Focus on your agenda and don't get derailed by others.

How do you feel about putting your goals, ambitions, and dreams on the backburner? Not great! Good, we agree. Top Performers focus on their own agenda and don't get derailed by other people's agendas.

Say no to:

Meetings you could be briefed on later or by email | Repeated status updates | Taking over a project you don't own | Talking to unqualified prospects

Top Performers are **73%** more likely to **focus on their own agenda.**

3 Sales Coaching

Managers excel at motivating sellers for high productivity and performance.

50% of Top Performers strongly agree **managers motivate sellers for high productivity and performance.**

This is the #1 skill of sales managers according to top-performing sellers, and the greatest difference between Top Performing Sales Managers and other sales managers. It's also critical that sales managers themselves are highly productive in order to drive their own success and inspire their teams to be highly motivated for productivity and performance.

4 Productive Habits

Change your habits when needed to improve results.

Extremely productive people (The XP) are 5.3x more likely to have productive habits overall. But changing habits when needed can be tough. To help, use the framework: "When I, Then I, Will If" For example, "When I log in in the morning, then I will send 3 prospecting emails." You call attention to the trigger and then direct your attention to the productive habit. By asking, "Will If" you hold yourself accountable.

Top Performers are **1.7x** more likely to **change their habits when needed to improve results.**

5 Account Growth

Find and capitalize on maximum cross-selling and up-selling opportunities.

Top Performers are 65% more likely to **excel at cross-selling and up-selling**, but there's work to be done for all sellers.

It costs more to acquire a new customer than to retain an existing one. One of the biggest opportunities for top-line growth is in finding and capitalizing on cross-selling and up-selling opportunities. But there are some big hurdles for teams to overcome. Most sellers:

- Don't know enough about the other offerings in their organization
- Don't see the additional opportunities
- Don't trust other areas of the organization or are territorial about their accounts
- Don't bring their internal teams together to explore ways to add value
- Don't have the facilitation skills to fully explore value they can offer clients

6 Sales Presentations

Lead highly effective proposal and finalist presentations.

Leading persuasive proposal presentations is a final step to winning the sale. While the presentation itself is important, your preparation ahead of time is essential to ensuring you hit the mark.

- Know who will be involved on your team and the buyer's
- Involve everyone on your team and the buyer's
- Do your research so the buyer team that'll be present
- Find out who your competitors are and when their presentations are happening

80% of buyers say **sellers lack presentation skills.**

7 Referrals

Get referrals from buyers and other relationships.

more likely to excel at getting referrals from buyers and other relationships.

Many sellers are uncomfortable asking for referrals from buyers or other relationships. Here are some ideas to help get your referral engine started:

- **Update your LinkedIn profile and stay engaged with your contacts.**
- **Give referrals to contacts in your network.**
- **Provide valuable content your referral sources can share with their networks.**
- **Ask for a referral!**

8 Relationship Building

Build strong, long-term relationships with buyers that buyers consider essential.

57% of Top Performers **excel at building strong, long-term relationships** with buyers.

Building strong, long-term relationships with buyers leads to repeat business, account growth, increased referrals, and greater revenue and margin. But in a hybrid world, it can be difficult to build rapport in traditional ways. Start by:

- Reserving time at the beginning of calls for rapport-building
- Joining the call a few minutes early
- Going beyond sharing names/roles
- Coming armed with rapport-building questions

9 Impact Case

Make and communicate strong ROI and financial cases for buyers.

You need to make a strong ROI case for buyers so they can justify purchase decisions. Uncover what matters to them during your conversations and you'll be able to demonstrate how you'll make an impact in that area. This can include:

- Time to market
- Profitability
- Waste
- Cost savings
- Quality improvements
- Brand recognition or preference
- Employee productivity

39% of sellers strongly agree they **understand how their solution meets the business needs and ROI of buyers.**

10 Sales Conversations

Lead conversations with the right balance of asking questions and talking.

Top Performers are 62% more likely to **lead conversations with the right balance of asking questions and talking.**

Salespeople are often told: "The sellers who succeed the most always ask great questions." This is true to a point, but some sellers take the advice too literally. If you always ask questions, you won't share a point of view or an opinion, won't tell stories, and won't help set the agenda for success. The key is to balance advocacy and inquiry.

11 Time Management

Maximize time spent on activities that drive the best results.

According to our research, the most productive people are more satisfied with their jobs, more likely to be top performers, and are happier. Maximizing time spent on activities that drive the best results is key. This means planning and being deliberate in how you spend your TIME.

Treasured: Time you hold dear.
Investment: Time that generates outsized returns.
Mandatory: Time you feel you must spend.
Empty: Time you waste.

The XP are **4.2x** more likely to minimize low-impact activities.

40% of Top Performers **maximize time spent on activities that drive the best results.**

Design a Sales Training Curriculum to Improve Sales Skills

Get your teams across the finish line first by improving in these 11 areas. Contact us to discover how we can help. **Learn more. >>**

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Sources:
1. Top Top Performing Sales Manager Benchmark Report, RAIN Group, forthcoming
2. Top Top Performing Sales Organization Benchmark Report, RAIN Group
3. Sales Management Benchmark Report, RAIN Group
4. Ideal Selling Skills & Challenges, RAIN Group
5. Top Performance in Sales Negotiation Benchmark Report, RAIN Group