



COMPLIMENTARY GUIDE

# ***SALES COACHING:*** A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR SALES MANAGERS

## Who Needs Sales Coaching?

Think for a minute about your sales team. Is everyone doing everything they possibly can right now to succeed at their maximum potential?

Is everyone on the team *completely dialed in*, doing everything they should and nothing they shouldn't? Do they have *all* the right skills across the sales cycle? Have they completely taken the lead on their own development?

Chances are even the best sellers on your team have some opportunity for improvement and greater success. And for those sellers who aren't currently among the best, there are things they should be doing differently to improve and become a Top Performer:

- Manage their time and days differently
- Lead sales conversations differently
- Pursue major sales opportunities differently
- Manage their territory, pipelines, and prospecting differently
- Negotiate agreements differently
- Sort through problems and address issues differently

If you can think of any areas where the sellers on your team need to do something differently, then you, as a sales coach, are in a prime position to help.

In fact, sales coaching makes a *huge* difference to organizations and sellers.



## Why Sales Coaching Matters

Research shows that Top Performers meet challenging sales targets, achieve premium pricing, and see higher win rates on proposed sales, so it's in an organization's best interest to provide sellers with coaching and training support to help them get there.

In our global sales skills research, we studied 85 skills and behaviors across six core selling skills categories (Relationships, Needs Discovery, Conversations & Communication, Solution Crafting, Value Case Making, Advancing the Sale), and four additional categories applicable to some sellers (Negotiating, Prospecting, Account Management, and Virtual Selling), plus Productivity (not how they *sell*, but how they *work*).

We analyzed the differences between sellers who receive ad hoc or intermittent coaching versus a regular, ongoing schedule of coaching and found that:

1. A regular, ongoing schedule or rhythm of coaching sessions is positively correlated with higher seller skill ratings in *all* categories.
2. When managers of top-performing teams deliver regular, ongoing coaching, the seller skills ratings are even higher.

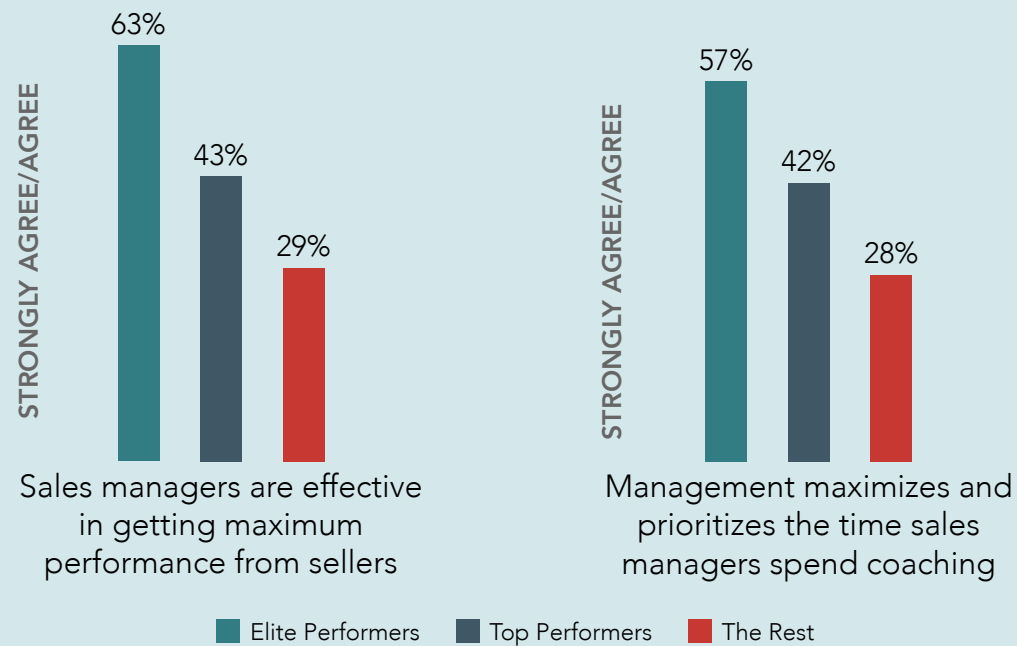
These high skills ratings make sense because, according to Top Performers, their sales managers are more likely to:

- Focus on coaching sellers to build their selling skills
- Coach on a regular schedule and address specific areas, including:
  - Helping sellers solve problems and challenges
  - Coaching sellers to grow accounts
  - Providing deal coaching to maximize selling wins
  - Coaching to lead masterful sales conversations
  - Coaching on virtual/remote selling

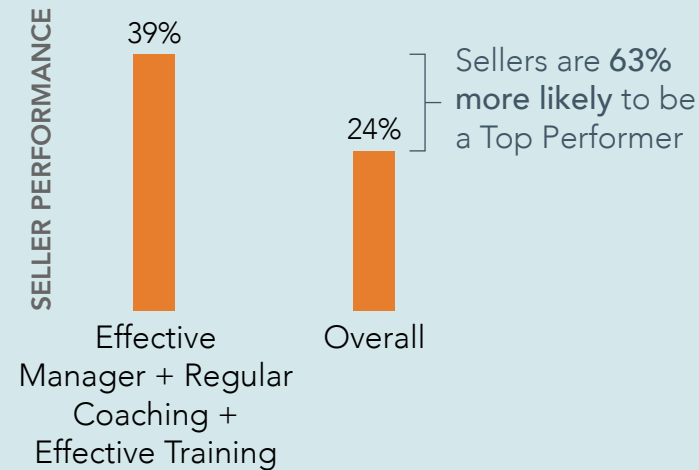
# Making the Case for Sales Coaching

In a RAIN Group Center for Sales Research study of 472 mid-size and large sales organizations, we learned that Elite and Top-Performing Sales Organizations have significantly more effective sales coaches than the organizations that don't achieve these standards.<sup>1</sup>

And, in fact, sales managers at Elite and Top-Performing Sales Organizations are much more likely to maximize the time they spend coaching.<sup>2</sup>



In another global study, this time surveying 1,004 sellers and sales managers, we found that sellers are 63% more likely to be Top Performers when they hit the trifecta having **an effective sales manager + regular ongoing coaching + effective training**.<sup>3</sup> Take any of these away—manager effectiveness, coaching frequency, or training effectiveness—and the likelihood of top performance drops dramatically.



<sup>1</sup> RAIN Group Center for Sales Research, *The Top-Performing Sales Organization Benchmark Report*.  
<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*  
<sup>3</sup> RAIN Group Center for Sales Research, *The Top-Performing Sales Manager Benchmark Report*.

## Sales Coaching Gone Wrong

When many sales managers see areas where their sellers can get better results, what do they do?

They try to help by pointing out the problem areas and simply *telling* sellers what they should do.

As shared in an article about performance feedback and coaching in the *Harvard Business Review*, when thousands of managers were asked to coach someone, they “simply provided the other person with advice or a solution. We regularly heard comments like ‘First you do this’ or ‘Why don’t you do this?’”<sup>4</sup>

The question is: is this helpful or not?

Other research tells us, “Telling people what we think of their performance doesn’t help them thrive and excel, and telling people how we think they should improve actually *hinders* learning.”<sup>5</sup>

There’s a time for direct advice, but by and large, our experience with thousands of sales coaches bears this out.

Consider this: if you were selling to a buyer and saw they needed something you could provide, and your primary communication and persuasion process was to simply tell them, “You’re not really getting the performance you should. To solve your problem and get better performance, buy this.”

How well do you think that would work?

Probably not so well.

Just like with selling, the more experience you have with coaching, the more you see *all* the pieces that need to come together to be great at it.

<sup>4</sup> *Harvard Business Review*, “Most Managers Don’t Know How to Coach People. But They Can Learn.”

<sup>5</sup> *Harvard Business Review*, “The Feedback Fallacy.”

## What It Takes to Coach for Top Performance: *Rhythm, Roles, and Conversations*

Like with sales, coaching is an exercise in communication, persuasion, and change management. To be great at these, you need to be able to lead masterful and nuanced conversations.

Like with sales, good coaching is about *more* than just leading masterful conversations. In selling, there's a sales process where you have a series of conversations—and take a series of actions *between* conversations—that results in wins.

Sales coaching is the same. There's a process, and if you follow it systematically, you can be sure to hit all the important areas and not miss something critical due to a lack of planning and discipline.

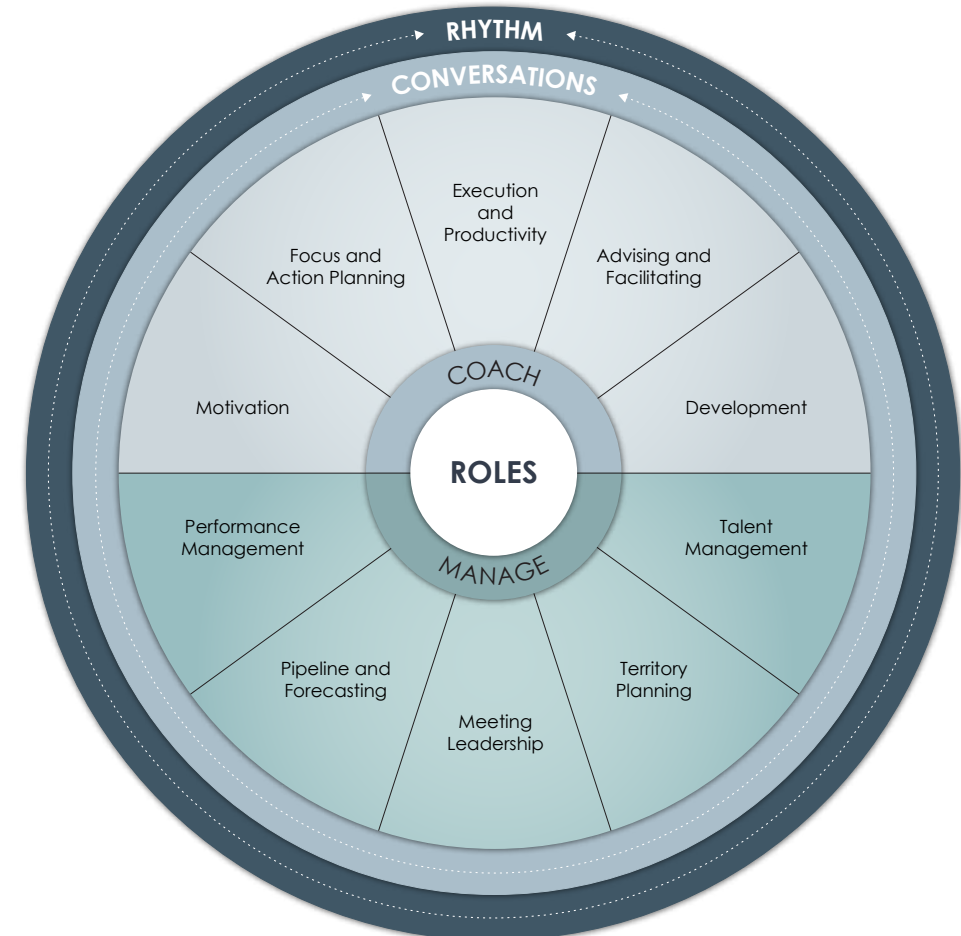
There are also different roles you need to play, and different skills you need to bring forth at different times, to suit the situation and drive success.

This is, in fact, how we built the RAIN Sales Coaching method to bring it all together.

While there are several areas to master to be great at sales coaching, there aren't *that* many areas. You can learn them one by one to become a master at sales coaching.

As an overview, let's take a look at RAIN Group's Top-Performing Sales Manager<sup>SM</sup> model, which has everything you need to become a Top-Performing Sales Manager and coach.

THE TOP-PERFORMING SALES MANAGER<sup>SM</sup>





## What It Takes to Coach for Top Performance: *Rhythm, Roles, and Conversations*

First there's **Rhythm**. It's the process, or cadence, you follow across a variety of types of coaching meetings and conversations with each seller and the team to bring sales coaching alive.

Second is **Roles**. There are 10 roles that sales managers need to play, five of which are directly related to sales coaching. Those roles are:

1. **Motivation:** You get maximum effort and proactivity from the team day in and day out.
2. **Focus and Action Planning:** You help sellers target the right areas to spend their time and effort, and help them steer clear of distractions and time wasters.
3. **Execution and Productivity:** You help sellers get the maximum success and the best outcomes during the time they spend working.
4. **Advising and Facilitating:** You help sellers in the trenches to fill their pipelines, win major sales, grow accounts, negotiate the best agreements, define and achieve their goals, and so on.
5. **Development:** You help sellers over the course of months and quarters to become better, more talented, more capable sellers than they might've been six months or a year or two earlier.

In short: you motivate, focus, execute, advise, and develop.

There are also five management-related roles, which include: accelerating performance when onboarding sellers or helping them through performance

issues, planning and reporting on pipelines and making forecasts, defining and tracking metrics and managing accountabilities, analyzing and planning territories, and managing talent—from hiring the right team members to exiting those who, after trying to support their success, might not be a good fit.

Finally, there's **Conversations**. Like with sales, the magic happens in the interactions. If you lead the conversations and communications the right way, you can:

- Build trust
- Help sellers take the right actions and avoid issues and mistakes
- Make sellers look good
- Have sellers want to work with you over a long period of time
- Help sellers learn and improve
- Help sellers improve performance and achieve success

Of course, just like in sales, it would be so nice to just point out problems we see, tell people what to do to fix them, and have them love us for it. It doesn't work that way, but sales coaching is learnable if you put your mind to it.

And if you put your mind to it, you unleash your sales coaching potential and become the best sales coach you can be.

# My Sales Coaching Plan

It's always important to remember: if you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there.

If you want your sellers to perform at the peak of their potential, it's essential to know the specific objectives you need to help your team achieve, and to map out the road that will help them achieve those objectives.

This is the purpose of RAIN Group's My Coaching Plan: to allow you to very quickly map out what you want to do to unleash your sales team's potential and build a specific action plan.

There are five sections to My Coaching Plan:

1. What Sellers Should Do Differently
2. Coaching Conversation and Meeting Rhythm
3. Coaching Checklist
4. Seller Development Plan
5. Priorities and Actions

On the pages that follow we break them down and provide examples of each so you can build your own coaching plan.





# 1. What Sellers Should Do Differently

It's critical to figure out what sellers on your team should do differently, seller by seller, so you know where you want to take them to improve their results.

For example, Sandra Jones is prospecting intermittently for three to five hours a week. If she were to prospect for eight hours a week in focused sprints, she would not only double her prospecting time, but also more than double her output. When she gets in the zone and achieves flow, she'll get more prospecting done and achieve better results for each hour she spends.

The impact of this will be for her to go from setting two meetings per week to five, so in about three months she'll have doubled her weighted average pipeline.

Sandra also isn't laser focused on her top three accounts, but if she had plans to grow them, and she executed against those plans, she would likely grow those accounts from \$500,000 per year to \$1.2 million per year.

WHAT SHOULD INDIVIDUAL SELLERS ON MY TEAM DO DIFFERENTLY? <i>Fill out for each seller on your team. Type the name of each seller and add bullets in each area for what they are doing now, should do differently, and the impact of the changes for each person</i>			
Name	Doing Now	Do Differently	Impact
Sandra Jones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Prospecting intermittently, 3-5 hours a week</li><li>■ Lacking proactive focus on top 3 accounts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Prospect in focused sprints for a minimum of 8 hours a week</li><li>■ 3 solid account plans, executed proactively</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ &lt;1 meetings set per week to 2 or more; pipeline doubled in 4 months</li><li>■ \$500,000 across these accounts to \$1.2 million in 1 year</li></ul>

# What Sellers Should Do Differently

The idea is to do this for each seller on your team. It's perfectly fine for you to come up with ideas yourself, but it's much more effective if you have facilitated meetings with your sellers to identify the areas that could have the greatest impact on their results, and allow the sellers to create their own plans, which you can then help them finish.

Choice drives motivation. If sellers come up with the plans themselves, they'll own them.

Next, you want to do the same for your team. Thinking in general across all team members, what shared priorities would make the biggest difference?

For example, across your team, perhaps the most important opportunity pursuits aren't organized, aren't strategized to craft the best plan to win, and, without strong sales opportunity plans in place, are lacking strong execution.

If each person identified which top pursuits to [Win Lab](#)—the process we at RAIN Group use for deal reviews—then plans would be in place to win major sales, and the team would have clear action plans, or task clarity, on what to do to win.

In doing this, the team win rate on proposed sales might jump from 44% to 51%—or seven percentage points—resulting in the whole team beating their annual sales plan.

## WHAT SHOULD MY TEAM DO DIFFERENTLY?

*Summarize the top 3 to 5 areas your entire team needs to do differently to raise the bar on success overall.*

Doing Now	Do Differently	Impact
Top sales pursuits are not organized; win rate suffering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Identify pursuits to Win Lab each week with each person (2-3 per person); 1 shared team Win Lab per week for our most important opportunity drives wins and build skills</li><li>■ Sales opportunity / Win Lab training</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Increase win rate on proposed sales from 44% to 51%; this one change drives sales from \$7,500,000 to \$9,200,000 in sales won this year, which would put us in the top 10% of sales teams</li></ul>

Keep the priorities on this list to no more than five, and if you identify more than five, only act on the smallest list of priorities at a time. You can almost always achieve them one by one, but it's difficult to achieve too many at one time.

## 2. Coaching Conversation and Meeting Rhythm

Every day you may have a quick check-in to make sure plans for the day are set, any major issues or challenges are surfaced, and all questions are answered. Whether you do this daily or three times per week depends on your team. In our experience, at least three times per week on a set schedule with each seller keeps accountability and focus highest and helps to develop strong and trusting relationships.

As these are 10 minutes per day, we averaged it to one hour total per week.

Weekly, you might have:

- 10-minute check in specifically on accountabilities for the week
- Scheduled deal review
- Weekly team sales meeting

This averages to about two and a half hours per week.

On average, each member of your team is in meetings with you for about five hours every week. This number is important because you want to maximize your team's time selling and keep them on track while helping them succeed during their meetings with you.

<b>MY SALES COACHING RHYTHM</b> <i>Develop or refine your sales meeting coaching rhythm.</i>	<b>Hours Per Week</b>
<b>Daily Meetings</b>	
■ Quick checks and huddles: 10 minutes per day	1
<b>Weekly Meetings</b>	
■ Accountability checks (individual): 10 minutes per week ■ Win Lab deal reviews (individual): 1-2 per week / average 30 minutes each ■ Sales meeting (team): 1 per week / 60 minutes	2.5
<b>Bi-Weekly Meetings</b>	
■ Pipeline review (individual): 1 hour ■ Core coaching (individual): 1-on-1 check in / 30 minutes	.75
<b>Monthly Meetings</b>	
■ Review plans, results, accountabilities (individual): 1 hour	.25
<b>Quarterly Meetings</b>	
■ Quarterly summary and strategy (team): 1.5 hours ■ Team building meeting / training: 1.5 hours	Less than .25
<b>Average time in meetings per week per seller</b>	<b>Approx. 5 hours</b>

## 3. Coaching Checklist

Here's a summary of common coaching activities to help you target what you'd like to do with your team. Select the strategies and tactics you want to use and fill in any of your own that you'd like to do. Download our ebook, [Unlocking the Productivity Code](#), for more details on the activities listed here.

### OVERALL

#### I will focus on...

- ☐ Leading effective group coaching and sales meetings
- ☐ Leading effective 1-on-1 coaching conversations
- ☐ Updating the rhythm of meeting and interactions with my team

#### ...the following sales coaching roles:

- ☐ Motivating my team
- ☐ Focusing my team's efforts on the right actions
- ☐ Helping my team concentrate and execute
- ☐ Advising my team on success in specific areas
- ☐ Developing my team's sales skills and competencies
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### MOTIVATE

#### I will work with my team on...

- ☐ [Calendaring Investment TIME](#)
- ☐ [Building goals, and quarterly and monthly objectives](#)
- ☐ [Implementing a success-driving morning routine](#)
- ☐ Practicing positive self-talk
- ☐ Saying, "3...2...1...Go!"
- ☐ Developing shared goals to boost team spirit
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### DEVELOP

#### I will work with my team to...

- ☐ Build professional development plans
- ☐ Review development plans at least quarterly
- ☐ Implement/apply recently rolled out training initiatives
- ☐ Take advantage of training opportunities our company makes available
- ☐ Push them out of their comfort zones to try new things, practice new skills
- ☐ Drive professional development as a regular agenda item during sales meetings
- ☐ Onboard new team members in a focused, consistent way that maximizes their time to success
- ☐ Encourage knowledge sharing across the team
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### EXECUTE

#### I will work with my team on...

- ☐ [TIME Sprinting](#) for increased productivity
- ☐ Saying, "3...2...1...Stop!"
- ☐ Structured problem solving individually and/or as a group
- ☐ Increasing accountability in team meetings
- ☐ Implementing commitment contracts
- ☐ Leading effective group coaching and sales meetings
- ☐ Leading effective 1-on-1 coaching conversations
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### FOCUS

#### I will work with my team on...

- ☐ Planning and tracking actions weekly with an accountability partner
- ☐ Having a clear "Do Differently" plan for each person
- ☐ Putting their [Greatest Investment Activities](#) (GIAs) first
- ☐ Being impossible to distract
- ☐ Saying "No" as appropriate to maintain focus
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### ADVISE

#### I will work with my team on...

- ☐ Win Labbing their opportunities, averaging \_\_\_\_ Win Lab discussions per week with each seller
- ☐ Creating and executing world-class [strategic account plans](#)
- ☐ Driving maximum pipeline growth through driving prospecting execution
- ☐ Making sure their pipelines are tight and solid with regular deep reviews
- ☐ Focusing on the pipeline opportunities most worth their time (i.e., manage pursuit intensity)
- ☐ Solving everyday problems and issues with [4 States of Structured Problem Solving](#) discussions
- ☐ Tackling difficult performance issues with 4 Stages of Structured Problem Solving discussions
- ☐ Ensuring they understand and use the selling tools and resources available to them
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

Download a fillable version of this checklist here. —>

# 4. Seller Development Plan

You'll want to capture areas for development focus in a Skill Development Plan. Again, this is done by individual seller and will help guide your conversations with that individual to help them develop their skills.

**Seller Name** Tony Mann **Last Updated** Oct 22

OVERALL AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT FOCUS				
■ Develop plan for more strategic relationship building (online and off)				
■ Action and accountability training and coaching; get in the zone more often				
■ 2 Win Labs per week plus training on opportunity management to drive new sales winning skills and habits				

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ATTRIBUTES	PROFICIENCY LOW 1 - 5 HIGH		PLAN TO DEVELOP <i>INCLUDING TRAINING AND COACHING</i>	TESTING FOR PROFICIENCY
	Now	Target		

## Skills

Influencing buyer agenda	3	4	Advanced Consultative Selling skills training	Call reviews
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## Knowledge

Insight about financial services industry	3	5	Weekly reading and discussion of industry news; get subscription to 2 leading magazines	Discussions during coaching; knowledge share to team at monthly meetings
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## Attributes

Motivated and proactive	2	4	Attends 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity program	Weekly action plans and reviews; calendarizing investment time
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# 5. Priorities and Actions

Finally, summarize everything, including an implementation plan.

For example, you'll want to include:

- Your accountability partner, a person you'll check in with each week, sharing your priorities and reporting on what you accomplish (and didn't accomplish) in the week prior.
- Your top priorities.
- Your objectives this month (ensure they align with your top priorities).

It might look something like the example to the right.

MY ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER'S NAME	Marty Jones	REPORT PROGRESS ON (DAY / TIME)	Fridays at 12:00
TOP 3 TO 5 PRIORITIES NEXT 90 DAYS No more than 5. <b>Star/Bold</b> the most important priority.		OBJECTIVES THIS MONTH Keep list short. <b>Star/Bold</b> the most important priority.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Completely focus the team on highest impact activities every day</li><li>2. Greatly increase frequency and success of Win Lab deal reviews to increase win rate</li><li>3. Increase sales meeting effectiveness with better conversation skills</li><li>4. Manage pipeline so only real opportunities get focus and most time is spent on them</li><li>5. Drive pipeline with better prospecting skills and actions across team</li></ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Implement Coaching for Action and Accountability to focus everyone's time and effort</li><li>2. Install new coaching meeting rhythm</li><li>3. Make sure everyone gets great at Win Lab deal reviews</li><li>4. Cut out 5 to 10 hours per week crowding my schedule with non-value-add activities</li></ol>	

# Priorities and Actions

**How My Coaching Will Be Different** is very important to write out. In our experience, coaches who don't do this easily slip into the same coaching motions they've done in the past. But if you write down these actions, you can do your own accountability checks to make sure you stay on target as you review the plan.

**Success Metrics.** Similarly, having written success metrics that you regularly review will help you measure the progress being made and stay on track.

## HOW MY COACHING WILL BE DIFFERENT

*What I will change to make my coaching most effective.*

- I'll be much more intentional about how I work with the team
- Will focus on 3 key areas; prospecting, sales conversations, and Win Labbing
- Will focus much more on action and accountability; not just giving advice, but executing
- Will double my coaching time per month vs. ad hoc meetings and reporting

## SUCCESS METRICS

*How I will measure progress and know I'm successful.*

- Win rate on proposed sales from 44% to 51%
- Increase weighted average pipeline of team by 30%
- Increase conversations from first meetings to qualified opportunities by 10%
- Increase average size sale by 5%
- Increase team members achieving plan from 70% to 90%

**Action Plan.** These are specific to-do items you need to execute to make sure the plan comes alive for yourself and your team.

As you finish your plans, ask yourself, “If I actually execute the plan, will it make a positive difference, achieve the improvement metrics, and bring my team to another level?”

If the answer is no, keep working on the plan until you get there.

If it’s yes, it’s time to implement with action and accountability.

**Summary.** As a sales manager and sales coach, you play a major role in the success of your sellers and organization. By creating and following a coaching plan adapted to your team, you'll help your sellers and organization achieve top performance.

If you want additional guidance to unleash your sales coaching potential or that of your sales managers, learn more about [RAIN Sales Coaching](#) training.

ACTION PLAN				
Specific next steps for implementing My Coaching Plan				
What	When	Status		
		Not Yet Started	In Progress	Complete
Set up weekly plans and accountability checks with team	Sales meetings this week	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roll out coaching rhythm and schedule individual meetings	Sales meetings this week and just after	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create a schedule of rolling out strategies and hacks to use with team from the Coaching Checklist; add each agenda for next 3 months of sales meetings in 15-minute segments	October 28	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ride along or review recording of needs discovery meetings of each team member and create improvement plans	November 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Training Top-Performing Sales Coaches

## Drive Change from the Top with Sales Coaching Training

Managing a sales team is one of the most difficult—but exceptionally important—roles in any company:

- Top-Performing Sellers are 83% more likely to report having an extremely or very effective manager
- Sellers with less than 5 years' experience are 240% more likely to be a Top-Performing Seller when they have an effective manager

Sales managers hold the keys to unlocking sales performance, yet most don't have the skills to do their jobs effectively.

RAIN Group's RAIN Sales Coaching training will give your leaders the skills to lead remarkable sales team meetings, help sellers consistently exceed sales targets, and coach to top performance.

Your managers will learn to:

- Lead masterful, collaborative sales coaching conversations
- Build 90-day priority action plans for sellers to drive change and increase success
- Ignite their teams' productivity, maximize motivation, and reduce distractions
- Build capability development into their ongoing coaching rhythm
- Track and communicate progress, achievements, and results

[Click here to request a complimentary consultation.](#) →



## RAIN Group Delivers World-Class Sales Training

- Modular, multi-modal, and purpose-built for the **modern learner**.
- Unique approach to driving **behavior change** through training that we call Execution Assurance.
- Focused on driving the **business results** important to you.
- A **transformational experience** that ensures the development, adoption, and implementation of new skills.
- Action-oriented **coaching** prepares sellers for real situations and provides direct feedback.

# About RAIN Group

## Drive Transformational Change through Award-Winning Sales Training

We help organizations:

- Enhance sales capability with award-winning sales training
- Design and execute strategic account management initiatives
- Increase effectiveness of sales management and coaching

**Best IP:** We study buying and selling relentlessly through the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research. Our research and field work allows us to create industry-leading intellectual property to help our clients achieve the greatest success.

**Best Education System:** We use the best education approaches, methods, and technologies to make training work, stick, and transfer to the job.

**Best Results:** We make it our mission to drive value and achieve the highest client satisfaction through excellence in quality and producing transformational results for our clients.

