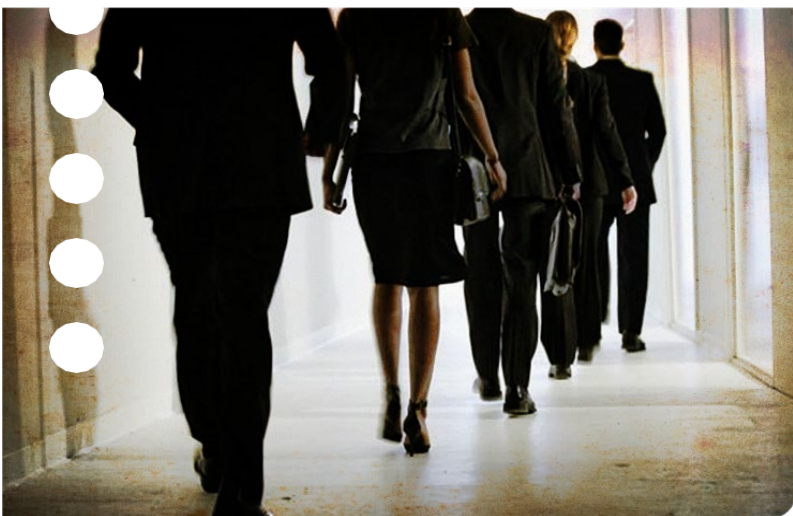


Customize Sales Training for Your Organization



Imagine your organization just hired a top seller. In their first month, you show them how to use your tools, sell to your buyers, and have them shadow a veteran seller. Your new hire's credentials are solid, so you expect them to perform well without much help.



Despite this, they aren't selling as expected, even after several months. What happened?

Time and time again, a one-size-fits-all approach to sales training has proven ineffective at onboarding new sellers, upskilling existing sellers, and driving results. If you want your sales training to have an impact, tailor it to your organization and your sellers by implementing learning journeys.

Design Learning Journeys

A learning journey is a series of developmental activities tailored for specific goals and groups of learners.

Learning journeys ensure the curriculum and subject matter are tailored to achieve the organization's desired outcomes and boost engagement, retention, and application. All contribute to building a continuous learning engine and long-term training success.

Relevant factors to account for might include:

- Role
- Offering
- Industry
- Market
- Channel
- Geography

Define Metrics

The learning journeys you create will be influenced by the metrics you hope to improve with training. Which needles do you want to move? Win rate? Deal size? Repeat business? Which will give you an idea of the progress being made?

You'll need to account for both lag measures, the outcome of actions taken, and lead measures, the specific activities that drive desired outcomes. For example, win rate on proposed sales and average revenue per account (lag measures) and pipeline growth and sales meetings (lead measures).

Each sales role will have its own lead and lag measures to consider. Knowing the rhythm of when and how these metrics are tracked allows you to design a learning journey that accounts for the benchmarks learners are expected to reach along the way.

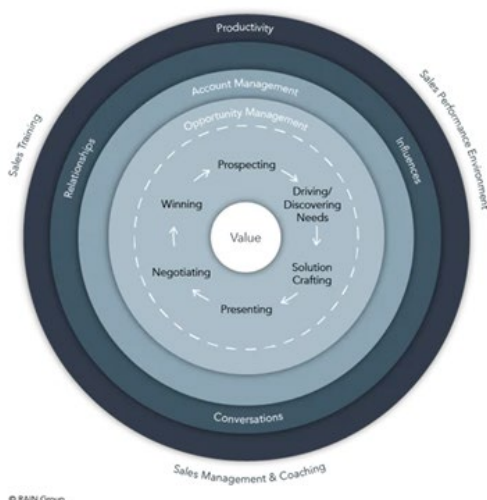
From here, you can tailor the training plan, topics, exercises, tools, and other training components to fit the learning journeys. Note that a learning journey goes beyond a single training engagement and focuses on the long-term steps necessary to influence seller behavior and help them achieve their goals.

Identify Needed Skills

You must know which skills to focus on to design an effective learning journey. When you take the time to assess your team and identify their areas of competency, you can build a sales training program that aligns with your strategic goals and addresses areas of skills improvement for your sellers.

It makes sense to assess both teamwide and individual sales skills capabilities. Assess sales skills against a competency model for sales roles that identifies the skills your sellers should have. For example, the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research identified the areas where top performers excel as shared in the Top-Performing Seller model.

The Top-Performing SellerSM Model



Deliver Blended Training

In the same way learning journeys should be built with individual customization in mind, effective sales training programs are tailored to the team's needs with a blend of delivery methods. In-person and virtual training each have strengths and drawbacks, leading many sales enablement teams to adopt a hybrid model.

A live event with a digital wraparound is how some organizations have chosen to run hybrid training. With hybrid training, sellers benefit from face-to-face collaboration with peers and instructors, and the flexibility of virtual training. Adding a combination of gamification, simulations,

video, and live exercises helps make training more engaging.

In any case, your training model should center around practical application. Limit time spent in a classroom and offer sellers the means to apply their skills and receive feedback. Each new skill should include at least one practical assignment and further reinforcement.

Reinforce to Grow Skills

Sales training isn't a fire-and-forget solution. Reinforcement requires as much customization and deliberate planning to account for individual learning journeys and the organization's technological infrastructure.

The variety of learning techniques that help facilitate training should also be used for reinforcement. Planned repetition of training content helps with retention; use multiple tools and modalities to help learning stick.

When you establish a set of metrics to track and implement learning journeys, managers can collaborate with sellers and reference metrics to adjust reinforcement as needed. For example, if a seller hasn't adopted a specific practice or tool, consider how they can seamlessly integrate it into their workflow.

Build and Implement a Coaching Plan

Managers will be the backbone of training reinforcement, so set expectations for them. Involve them in the design of the training process and have them participate in the sellers' training, so they understand where and how sellers will need support. Managers are the ones who will meet with and help tailor coaching plans for individual sellers or groups of sellers.

The coaching plan should include a mix of short- and long-term success metrics and action items around which managers collaborate with sellers. The manager or coach takes the role of facilitator, but sellers should have ultimate ownership over their development. Accountability plays a significant role in success.

Modify the exact structure of coaching depending on the sellers involved. Often,

customizing sales coaching comes down to finding a balance between a directive and facilitative approach.

For example, a directive approach may work best for newer or lower-skilled sellers. With this approach, sellers are offered more direct advice and instruction and dissuaded from forming bad habits. However, it's still worth creating opportunities to collaborate and allow the seller to draw their conclusions.

A facilitative approach is appropriate for higher-skilled sellers. The sales coach supports the seller, allowing them to direct much of their learning. The coach provides a sounding board and structure allowing the seller to grow.

Skilled sales coaches tailor their coaching plans to each seller. They design plans to match

the seller's role and experience level. They balance providing advice with collaborating and offering feedback

Find What Works

Customizing sales training to meet the needs of your organization and its sales professionals won't happen overnight. While proper planning is important, you must find what works and what doesn't for the organization and its sellers. Be prepared to adjust based on strategy and goals. And commit to a continuous learning approach so sellers can continue to improve and grow—new hires and existing sellers alike.

Andy Springer, Chief Client Officer at RAIN Group

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