



Post-Training Reinforcement

You've taught it, but have they learned it?

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I do a lot of sales training and I love it. A good training session is like a shot of adrenaline for me — it energizes me. And, if I've done my job well, the salespeople have an enjoyable time and learn some key techniques. I think that sales training is an essential investment in any organization's quest for success. However, there's a big difference between training and learning.

Many managers fall into the trap of thinking that a single training session can miraculously transform their sales team members into high-performing superstars. While some, in fact, do find a sales training session transformative, you should think of a sales training program as a foundation upon which to build. Many times, the big transformation occurs through post-training reinforcement. So, let's explore why post-training reinforcement is crucial. I'll also provide practical strategies for you to ensure your salespeople genuinely absorb and apply the concepts learned in training — whether it's mine, someone else's or your own.

Training sessions are indeed valuable, as they should equip sales teams with new skills, knowledge and strategies. However, a good training session can be an intense, information-packed event — and it may leave some participants overwhelmed. Even the most attentive learners can forget up to 70% of what they've learned within 24 hours of training if it is not reinforced properly. This is where post-training reinforcement comes into play. Here are four reasons why you should reinforce post-training:

(1) Retention and Application — The primary goal of any sales training is to not just impart knowledge, but to ensure that salespeople can apply it effectively in their day-to-day activities. Post-training reinforcement helps strengthen these concepts, making them stick. If your salespeople can't repeat the techniques they've been taught in front of your customers, they haven't truly learned them.

(2) Profitable Behavioral Change — You have seen me use this phrase before and it's vital. Sales training often focuses on changing behaviors and this transformation takes time. Reinforcement helps individuals shift from old habits to new, more effective and profitable ones. The word "habit" was used intentionally; when good sales skills become habitual, they are used in the field — and, hence, become profitable.

(3) Adaptation to Real-World Scenarios — Sales is a dynamic field and real-world situations can differ significantly from training scenarios. Remember, we deal with people — and people can present an infinite number of variables to deal with. Teach your salespeople skills and ideas, not words (i.e.,



good training teaches them to think about selling). Post-training reinforcement enables salespeople to adapt what they've learned to handle diverse situations effectively.

(4) Continuous Improvement — Reinforcement promotes a culture of continuous learning and improvement. It keeps sales team members engaged and motivated to enhance their skills continually. When salespeople think they are never done learning their craft, they are better salespeople with both new and existing customers. Don't ever let your salespeople get stale.

So how do you effectively reinforce training? Here are seven ways to strengthen your sales training:

(1) Regular Coaching and Feedback — Managers should perform regular one-on-one coaching sessions with their sales team members to view, assess and discuss their progress. Remember — effective coaching means watching them sell in real time, meaning that you have to get out of your office and share the field of battle with them. Once you do that, you have the credibility to provide constructive feedback and address specific challenges you saw. This helps solidify training concepts.

(2) Peer Learning and Knowledge Sharing — Encourage salespeople to share their experiences and insights with their peers. This collaborative approach fosters a learning community within the sales team and reinforces training concepts through discussions and real-world examples. One great way to do this is to have salespeople tell success stories during sales meetings of how a particular concept helped them move a buyer forward.

(3) Games and Challenges — Introduce friendly competitions, challenges or quizzes related to the training content. This not only makes learning more engaging, but also helps salespeople apply what they've learned in a fun and competitive manner. At one of my previous sales management jobs,

I used to carry \$25 gift cards in my pocket. I'd catch a salesperson walking into the building and I'd stop him (or her) and ask something like, "What are two great questions to open a sales call?" or "What's your elevator pitch?" If the salesperson delivered a good response, he got a card — an instant reward.

(4) Microlearning — Break down training content into bite-sized, easily digestible modules. Deliver these minilessons periodically to reinforce key concepts and prevent information overload. For example, in my own two-day course, we spend two hours on sales questions. You don't need to do that. Instead, do an exercise to develop one question of a specific type. Rotate the topics appropriately.

(5) Role-Playing Exercises — I know, I know, nobody likes role-playing. So, why do we do it? Because it works. Role-playing is actually more difficult than real selling. I always liken it to "resistance training for salespeople"; if your people can be effective when role-playing, they will be strong in the field. Organize role-playing exercises that mimic real sales situations. The key to this type of role-play is to make sure that the salespeople are implementing the lessons taught, not "making a sale." My rule in role-playing is simple. I usually play the customer, and if the salespeople are implementing the lessons correctly, I'm a fairly easy customer. If not, I get tougher.

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Reward the behavior that you want and you'll get more of it.

(6) Performance Metrics and Goal Setting — Set clear performance metrics and goals for salespeople to track their progress. This helps align their efforts with the training objectives and motivates them to consistently apply what they've learned.

(7) Leverage Technology — Use digital platforms and e-learning tools to facilitate ongoing learning and reinforcement. These platforms can provide interactive quizzes,

resources and reminders to keep training concepts fresh in the minds of salespeople.

Remember that the goal is not just to have a training program, but to ensure that your salespeople genuinely learn and apply the concepts taught to drive improved sales performance. With a consistent post-training reinforcement strategy, your sales team will be better equipped to win more customers and keep the ones they have. ■

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