



THE GMarie GROUP
Performance Improvement Specialists

Sales Training

Developing Instruction for Fast-Paced Sales Environments

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Introduction

Salespeople know they have a competitive advantage when “in the know” of current market trends, product rollouts and competitive offerings. But with multiple clients, competing priorities and longer sales cycles, training is often left at the bottom of their to-do lists. What can we learning experts do to help salespeople with this predicament? If they don't have time to come to us—to the classrooms—what can we do to bring instruction to them?

Wait, Who Are We Training?

Before diving into the most effective designs for sales training, let's consider what we know about our learning audience. Salespeople are generally fast-paced, results-driven individuals who have little time but a lot of motivation for improving their performance. These learners are competitive; they want to “win” the deal. As a result, most love a good challenge, especially if they get to compete against their colleagues (as they do every day on-the-job). With these learner characteristics in mind, what kind of training design makes the best sense?

Fast Paced, Fast Approach

Energize your sales force through fast-paced, innovative training that matches salespeople's energy and thirst to “win.” If they snooze in the classroom (that is, if they show up at all), you lose both time and money. Nobody wants that. Instead, consider the following sales training strategies, which save learners' time and keeps them informed:

- Use a brief, high-impact, eye-opening introduction to “set the stage” for learning.
- Keep the training brief; avoid overloading this audience with details.
- Show (don't tell) salespeople how the concepts will benefit them.
- Let learners practice new skills through trial-and-error.

High-Impact Introductions

Whether instructor-led or Web-based training, stop the small talk and jump right in. If salespeople are not “hooked” into the training at the word “go,” they’ll hang a left and head somewhere else—like to their client, who will wonder why this sales guy doesn’t know much about the company’s new product. Instead, use an eye-opening treatment that leaves your salesperson thirsty for more.

For Example. . . .	
Boring Introduction for Salespeople	Engaging Introduction for Salespeople
10-minute verbal overview of what salespeople will get out of this training, including a long list of learning objectives that many in this learning audience wouldn’t read unless forced to do so. . . .	30 – 60 second high-impact video that introduces the training topic “in a nutshell” via storytelling, creative parables, comedy, drama – the kind of stuff that hooks you into watching a television commercial

Keep It Brief

If a typical salesperson has a mantra, it might be “get to the point.” For this learning audience, too many details are not only annoying – they are a waste of time. And, worse, they lead to ineffective training that does not return on its investment.

As a result, keep the following points in mind:

- If in doubt, cut it out: *What content is nice to know versus need to know? How will salespeople use this content? Will they remember this detail 15 minutes after the training? Can they find this information somewhere else when they need it (e.g. job aid, support Web site)?*
- Keep it moving: *How can you mix up the format (e.g. video, podcast, multimedia presentation, discussion, hands-on activity) to add interest?*

Show (Don't Tell)

So you've cut out the content that doesn't need to be there. But how do the learners know the remaining content is important? They won't just take your word for it – you must *show* them. Ask yourselves the following information, and then weave your answers into the training:

- What proof is available that using these particular techniques will help them close more deals?
- How can you visually demonstrate these concepts (as opposed to talking about them)?
- What points can you use to drive these messages home (creative parables, startling statistics, etc.)?

Trial and Error

Some people like to read every detailed instruction before getting to work. Others like to try it first and then, if they get stuck, they ask for help. Generally, salespeople fall into the second group. As a result, let them get to work with the content. After they make a mistake, show them how it is done correctly.

For Example. . . .	
Boring Instruction for Salespeople	Engaging Instruction for Salespeople
<p><i>Instructor-led training</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-minute presentation about product • 10-minute role play demonstration • 5-minute discussion analyzing demonstration • 15-minute role play activity 	<p><i>E-learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-second video: overview of product and challenge to sell it to a customer • 15-minute simulation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sell product to customer ○ If incorrect, receive more detailed feedback (e.g. video demonstration on how to sell it more effectively)

Summary

Learning professionals face special challenges when developing training in the sales environment. With the speed of new product introduction, the ever-changing array of existing products, the typical sales personality and attitude toward learning, and the pressures of the marketplace, it can be daunting to address sales training needs.

The design and development considerations and advice we have offered here will help you to create more dynamic, better accepted training programs for your salespeople.

The GMarie Group

For over 20 years, The GMarie Group has provided nationwide clients with custom learning and performance improvement solutions. To do so, we apply the ADDIE Model, a systematic process for:

Analyzing Performance and Training Needs

The GMarie Group recommends initiating a project through rigorous analysis, which is the key to obtaining valid results and ensuring that a significant cross-section of the organization has a stake in the process. We can conduct training needs and performance analysis to determine learning solutions to address identified performance gaps.

Designing and Developing Effective Solutions

We design and develop online (Web-based) training, virtual Webcasts, podcasts, instructor-led training, performance support tools, learning portals and much more! Our team can author your custom product using any industry-standard authoring tool (e.g. Flash, Lectora, Flypaper and Captivate).

Implementing Products and Programs

We also provide training program planning and coordination, train-the-trainer, training delivery and facilitation for all types of subject matter. We can also help integrate Web-based solutions into your LMS or LCMS.

Evaluating Reactions, Learning, Skills Transfer and Returns

Using Kirkpatrick's "Four Levels of Evaluation," we develop tools and scoring mechanisms to measure participant reactions to learning, mastery of objectives, transfer of skills to the job and return-on-objectives.

How Can We Help YOU?

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