

10-Step Sales System for Growth: Step 7: Your Sales Training Plan

One of the value drivers that business owners find most difficult to improve is revenue growth. Unless your products and services are obsolete or not competitive, revenue growth is achievable. But it requires a well thought out plan, discipline, and hard work. This series of articles provides a step-by-step approach to grow your revenue and perhaps even surpass your sales goals.

Step 7: Your Sales Training Plan

Sales training is often taken too lightly. Sales training is not the time to sit around, play with your cell phone, drink coffee, and daydream.



Effective sales training is work - EVERYONE MUST WORK. Everyone must show up on time. Everyone must know what is expected and what the agenda is. Everyone must bring a great attitude and get into it. The meeting must end on time. This is important work, and your results will reflect your efforts.

You're saying, "But wait, you don't understand, I have a bunch of salespeople who aren't into it. Many don't even want to come!"

We hear you. You're not alone. Here's the truth for those of you who think like this. You are externalizing the problem. The problem is NOT your people. It's time for you lead the way and shape your culture. It's time for you to do absolutely everything within your power so that your salespeople look forward to sales training. Once you do this, you'll be amazed at how your sales culture and people change. On the other hand, if you have some PUREs, (Previously Undetected Recruiting Errors) then you may need to help them find a new employer. (Refer back to Step 6.)

Here are the key ingredients for an effective, engaging sales training program:

1. Create and publish your training topics weeks in advance - for the quarter or year or product line or whatever makes the most sense for your business.
2. Train on consistent days and times. Start and finish on time.
3. Send your agenda or presentation out in advance.
4. Use every tool at your disposal to ensure sales training sticks.
5. The presenter must be well prepared, energizing, and entertaining.
6. Document the details of your sales training, attendance, and "what to do different next time" after each session. Discuss with others to see how to improve.

Let's go through these in more detail:

1. Publish your sales training topics as far in advance as you can.

This forces you to think through the details and prioritize. If you could only train on one topic for the rest of the year, what would it be? If only two? You may be better off going deep as opposed to wide. Each training session should build on the previous week at some level. Your employees will be both impressed and thankful with your foresight.

2. Train on consistent days and times.

Training sometimes falls off when things get "busy." But, would you skip running weekly paychecks every once in a while because you don't have time? Be disciplined. This one is totally within your control. If you start late, and run late, you send the message that this is acceptable. And if that's the case where do you draw the line for the rest of your sales activities or company?

3. Send your agenda or presentation out in advance.

If this is hard for you, try this: Jot down any ideas you hear or think of related to sales training in your sales journal. Then spend a few minutes each day updating your presentation. The process for creating the agenda and content is ongoing, similar to your exercise regimen. Also, direct your employees to review the material before the meeting and hold them accountable for doing so.

4. Use every tool at your disposal to ensure sales training sticks.

The best training incorporates the three learning methods: visual, kinesthetic, and audio. Your employees need to participate. Engage them throughout. Role play. Recognize. Use PowerPoint. Review the previous week and test to see what they retained - either oral or written. Videos help. YouTube has several million available. Bring in a guest speaker. Hand out product or brochures. Use contests to align with your training. Your employees should, at times, run the meetings or portions of them. Nothing makes training stick better than preparing to teach the material. If you do it right, your employees will look forward to training, and this positive approach will help your sales training stick as well. Last note: anything remotely negative or administrative must be covered first - never last.

5. The presenter must be well prepared, energizing, and entertaining.

...to the greatest degree possible, anyway. If you get anxiety in front of people, that's okay. Public speaking is a common fear. The good news is that harnessed anxiety gives your presentation extra energy. Just make sure your anxiety isn't due to lack of preparation. We suggest you practice while driving. The best presentations are just 10-15 minutes long. Include humor. Tell great, relevant stories. Smile. Make eye contact. Becoming a great speaker takes time and focused practice. Stay dedicated!

6. Document the details of your sales training, attendance, and "what to do different next time" after each session.

If you continually seek feedback you will eventually get it without asking. Why? Because your people know you care, and they want sales training to improve as well. NFL coaches spend hours each week reviewing game and practice film. Why not watch a video of your sales training with some of your team to see how to improve? One benefit of the documentation is that you can easily train employees who missed out, or even new hires.

For more information or to learn how L. Harris Partners can help you grow your business:



Phone 952.944.3303
tom.siders@lharrispartners.com
www.lharrispartners.com