



Sales Training vs. Product Sales Training

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Your sales reps know HOW to sell, teach them how to sell YOUR products.

Does your sales management team know the difference between Sales Training and Product Sales Training?

Sales Training vs. Product Sales Training

Does Your Sales Management Team Know the Difference?

Creating the right mix for effective sales rep training is a growing challenge for Sales Managers.

New hires generally need classical “sales training” designed for entry-level reps. Veteran successful sales reps who know how to sell need something different; they need and want “product sales training.”

What are the differentiators between those two training options?

What Is Sales Training?

Traditional Sales Training is almost mandatory for new sales reps. That training typically focuses on two key topics: developing and nurturing personality traits conducive to selling and basic sales skills.

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Developing the Sales Personality

Well-designed Sales Training curriculums incorporate a strong mix of these key topics:

- Self-confidence
- Communication skills
- Active listening skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Mental toughness
- Time management
- Coping skills to handle rejection
- Ability to deal with rude people
- Computer literacy

In addition to personal development skills, this type of Sales Training includes instruction in basic, more generic sales techniques and methodology for early career sales reps.

Developing Sales Skills

Typically, this focuses on:

- Identifying new account opportunities and new sales opportunities
- Finding a champion within the company

This is important for new hires, but it focuses on personal skills development and sales fundamentals, not customer needs.

- Identifying the decision makers
- Understanding the decision-making process
- Understanding the budgeting and purchasing cycles
- Researching the payment options the company uses (leasing, buying)
- Selling against objections
- Avoiding questions with “yes” or “no” answers
- Validating and defending price and product costs
- Handing off a sale
- Networking within existing accounts
- Identifying new sales opportunities within existing accounts

Sales Managers have a broad spectrum of choices for this kind of training. It ranges from Dale Carnegie-style curriculums to a myriad of Sales Training programs and experts (a Google search turns up hundreds), DVD-delivered courses, and even motivational speakers.

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Product Sales Training focuses on customers. It delivers the information sales reps need to sell that specific product— information that makes them solution-providing members of the customers' team.

As sales reps become more successful and skilled, the focus of “sales training” needs to be re-evaluated, refocused and shifted to customer-centric sales training: key product selling information that, combined with acquired selling skills, gives sales reps the edge they need to provide solutions and close more sales.

Sales Managers need to create the right mix between Sales Training and Product Sales Training.

What Is Product Sales Training?

Product Sales Training focuses on customers because it delivers the information sales reps need to sell that specific product— information that makes them solution-providing members of the customer’s team—and that helps them close more sales.

Busy, successful sales reps need product selling information distilled down to answers for core questions. Properly developed Product Sales Training is systematically created to address customer-required information and answer solution-related questions.

High-quality Product Sales Training needs to provide value-added, product-specific selling information and the answers to sales reps' most important selling questions.

- **Who?** Who is the best customer to present to?
- **How?** How can/should customers use the product or service?
- **Why?** What is the value proposition for the product or service to the customer?
- **Competitive Set?** How does the product or service surpass the competition?
- **What's Next?** How can I meet or exceed the customer's needs and close the sale?

High-quality Product Sales Training requires careful crafting, consistent formatting and presentation, timely delivery, and easy access. It needs to provide value-added, product-specific selling information and the answers to sales reps' most important selling questions.

- **Product-Centric Content:** Actionable product information and use case scenarios so reps understand the context for the product they are presenting
- **Sales Targeting:** Information sales reps need to recognize selling opportunities
- **Sales Dialogues:** Support information that allows reps to start the sales conversation
- **Customer-Centric Value Propositions:** Critical product advantages that demonstrate the product's value proposition and how it relates to a customer solution

Product Sales Training is more broadly targeted and therefore more cost-effective to develop and deploy.

- **Features/Benefits:** Clear, concise details of new and value-added product features and benefits
- **Competitive Advantages:** Clear, simple language that defines the competitive feature set and distinguishes it from competitive products with highlighted and clear differentiators, setting it apart from the competition

Product Sales Training Is Efficient and Cost-Effective

Unlike personally focused Sales Training, Product Sales Training can be created for use by varied categories of B2B sales reps; by definition, it is more broadly targeted and therefore more cost-effective to develop and deploy. The broad categories of sales reps where Product Sales Training can be applied include:

- Direct-employed reps
- Manufacturers' reps
- Dealer/distributor reps
- Customer service reps (order taking)
- New hires (any of the above categories)

Since Product Sales Training can be used by multiple levels of sales reps, it is a formidable tool in the hands of sales and marketing managers.

Product Sales Training can be created to achieve multiple training objectives and goals.

Using Product Sales Training Effectively

Product Sales Training can be created to achieve multiple training objectives and goals, including:

- **Product and Technology Updates:** Providing updates on product feature upgrades
- **Introductions:** Introducing new products and services
- **Detailed Explanations:** Explaining technology details and advances
- **Promotional Programs:** Announcing promotional programs for customers
- **Onboarding:** Accelerating new-hire training with an extensive library of Product Sales Training components

Delivering Product Sales Training

The more personal nature of Sales Training often requires the commitment of time that cuts into traditional selling time.

Product Sales Training need not be constrained to a specific time or place.

Using web-based technology, Product Sales Training is the most cost-effective tool for keeping a skilled sales team informed and meeting sales objectives.

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The web platform allows:

- Timely delivery
- 24/7 access
- Consistent information
- Consistent presentation format
- Writing styles that match current reading styles: short, bullet-pointed information sound bites
- Multimedia graphics: animations of product use and features, captioned images, video clips and podcasts are all possible
- Quick access to additional technical information and sales collateral material

Measuring Training Success

Of course, the ultimate measure of Sales Training and Product Sales Training will always be only one thing: sales.

That said, measuring the subjective nature of a skill development Sales Training program has always been a management challenge.

Measuring a Product Sales Training program is more objective and much easier—particularly with web delivery.

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Using web metrics, Sales Managers can get periodic reports that verify:

- **Training Compliance:** Confirmation that a training module has been completed and at what day and time
- **Comprehension:** Quiz completions and scores
- **Sales Rep Engagement Levels:** Metrics tracking for those who download additional resources for offline review
- **Time Commitment:** When reps take the training and how long they spend on it
- **Peer Group “Standings”:** Metrics analysis that shows which reps are taking the most advantage of the training program

Summary

While Sales Training addresses and can enhance personal skill sets and skill-set development, that represents only half of the selling equation; the other half must be product knowledge and knowledge of how to sell the product: Product Sales Training.

Even the very best sales reps can only sell what they know. Products and services that fall outside their knowledge and comfort zone simply won't sell well.

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Sales Managers who understand these differentiators and construct their training curriculums accordingly will deliver an appropriate mix of Sales Training and Product Sales training, with the payoff of increased product sales.

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The company has created over 200 Product Training Modules, trained hundreds of sales reps worldwide and administered and reported on an accumulated 500,000 hours of web based training. With TechScholar, all product training costs are in a single budget line, and manufacturers and distributors get reports on training activities and performance that allow them to evaluate and validate their spend.

To learn more about how a TechScholar Product Sales Training campus can solve your company's training challenges, contact us today.

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