

# TechScholar™



## How to Improve Product Sales Training Engagement

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

# How to Improve Product Sales Training Engagement

## Introduction

Today, selling is different—and more difficult than it's ever been, largely because salespeople are no longer the drivers and controllers of the sales process. Buyers have the power to research products and solutions with their keyboards, and they have multiple—if not dozens—of manufacturer options. Moreover, most products and solutions lack true differentiation. And the majority of sales reps are no different: they're readily available and generally present the same way. But some reps have learned to differentiate themselves. Those are the sales reps who will succeed in the new normal.

In a competitive market, the only way for sales reps to truly stand out is to become strategic advisors invested in developing a unique solution for their buyers. To help their reseller sales reps develop the acumen necessary to become strategic advisors, leading manufacturers and sales rep organizations are offering their sales reps a wide array of training opportunities, making sales reps some of the most highly trained people in the business world.

Organizations are likely to invest in training they believe might give their sales reps even a small advantage over the competition. But it's not enough to deliver product sales training on autopilot. All too often, product sales training fails to meet its objectives. Instead, organizations need to offer their

sales reps effective training that goes beyond sales methodologies and product spec sheets.

Let's take a closer look at the current state of product sales training in the U.S. and why it's falling short for many organizations.

## Product Sales Training By the Numbers

The product sales training market is expected to grow by \$4.21 billion between 2020 and 2024, in large part driven by a growing emphasis on microlearning, or bite-sized learning.<sup>1</sup> Learners themselves are highly receptive to virtual training modalities,



Source: Spotio

<sup>1</sup>Technavio. (2020, August 4). COVID-19 Impacts: Product-Based Sales Training Market Will Accelerate at a CAGR of Over 13% Through 2020-2024. <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200804005442/en/>

such as e-learning: in a recent survey by Training Industry and Imparta, 74% of respondents said e-learning was an effective sales training tool.<sup>2</sup> Studies have also found that using sales reps' preferred training modalities improves the effectiveness of training.<sup>3</sup>

Yet many businesses are falling short in implementing product sales training, whether e-learning or otherwise, for their internal and external teams. A 2020 survey by sales software company Spotio found that the biggest challenge facing B2B outside sales leaders is sales rep onboarding, training, and turnover.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the majority of outside sales managers and sales executives want better tools and software to enable greater success for their field reps.<sup>5</sup>

But most organizations have yet to turn to online learning for sales training. In fact, only 27% of learners report receiving sales training through e-learning.<sup>6</sup> Instead, most organizations still use a mix of training types: instructor-led classroom training, virtual classrooms, and other online methods.<sup>7</sup>

## What's Wrong With Product Sales Training Today?

All too often, product sales training doesn't lead to the results that organizations hoped for or return any yield on their investment. Why?

**Sales reps don't like attending training.** They frequently don't find it relevant to what they need to know about a product.

**Training is inconvenient.** Reps find scheduled, in-person training a distraction from their revenue-producing activities of contacting prospects and existing customers.

**Reps don't engage with training.** Online training isn't created with engagement in mind. Reps quickly bore of hearing someone drone on and reading too much text on a screen. Online training needs to simplify product information and use videos and voiceovers to ensure that visual and auditory learners' needs are met.

**Training doesn't offer context.** Many companies offer training that consists solely of statistics about their products without putting those numbers in context. As a result, it's hard for reps to understand how and when they should pitch a new product or service and who should hear their pitch.

**Reps don't retain what they learn.** Too many training programs don't have any method for reinforcing their reps' learning, so it's simply a matter of in and out of their brain in a matter of days, if not hours or minutes. The Ebbinghaus curve suggests that 42% of learning is lost after 20 minutes, 67% is lost after 24 hours, 79% is lost after 31 days, and 90% is lost after 60 days.<sup>8</sup> It's critical that reps absorb what they learn so they can use it in call after call through assessments and other retention aids.

**Training is costly.** Many organizations fail to recognize that the cost of training goes beyond paying for the instruction itself and expenses, such as travel to a meeting or class; it also includes reps' giving up prime selling time to attend a lecture or online lesson.

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<sup>2</sup>Oesch, T. (2019, January 29). The Importance of Virtual Sales Training—and How to Get It Right. <https://trainingindustry.com/articles/sales/the-importance-of-virtual-sales-training-and-how-to-get-it-right/>

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Gibson, T. (2020, February 17). The State of Field Sales in 2020 (Plus Outside Sales Statistics). <https://www.saleshacker.com/state-field-sales-report/>

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Freifeld, L. (2019, November 6). 2019 Training Industry Report. <https://trainingmag.com/trgmag-article/2019-training-industry-report>

<sup>8</sup>Ebbinghaus, H. (2013). Memory: a contribution to experimental psychology. *Annals of Neurosciences*, 20(4), 155-156. <https://doi.org/10.5214/ans.0972.7531.200408>.

Bearing out these complaints, in 2020, organizations reported that their highest training priorities in terms of resource allocation are increasing the effectiveness of training programs, measuring the impact of training, reducing the costs of training, and increasing learner usage of training.<sup>9</sup> It's time for them to consider the merits of online product sales training, which can help them accomplish all of these goals.

## The Benefits of Online Product Sales Training

Online product sales training helps sales reps get up to speed on their own terms: when they want, where they want, and how they want. Here are the common benefits that reps cite when they receive product sales training virtually:



**Convenient:** On-demand learning makes it possible for reps to learn at their convenience, whether on their phone, tablet, or computer.



**Bite-sized:** Snippets of information improve learning and retention compared to dense training material full of numbers, such as “feeds and speeds,” performance variables, and engineering specifications.



**Simple to apply:** Reps want tools to help them close more deals, not tools that make selling more complex. They want to understand the key value propositions and product differentiators. Memory aids such as bulleted information, brief lists of key takeaways, and accessible resources reinforce the concepts that reps learn. Most of all, they want to know the questions to ask and how to open the sales dialogue.



**Customized:** Reps need training that aligns with the needs of the business and that focuses on sharing information and context to help them understand how to apply their learning in conversations with prospects.



**Measurable:** Organizations must be able to see the value and efficacy of training through analytics and assessments that measure retention, establishing a return on their investment.

## Why TechScholar Product Sales Training Is Different

TechScholar's online Product Sales Training platform isn't any ordinary sales training platform. A hybrid of traditional sales training and solutions selling, it brings the best of both worlds into a format that's as digestible as it is intuitive.

TechScholar Product Training Modules (PTMs) zero in on what sales reps need to know to excel at selling—key value propositions, features and benefits, selling opportunities, and conversation starters—then tie it all together with links to critical sales collateral and a one-page summary that reps can download for reference on the go.

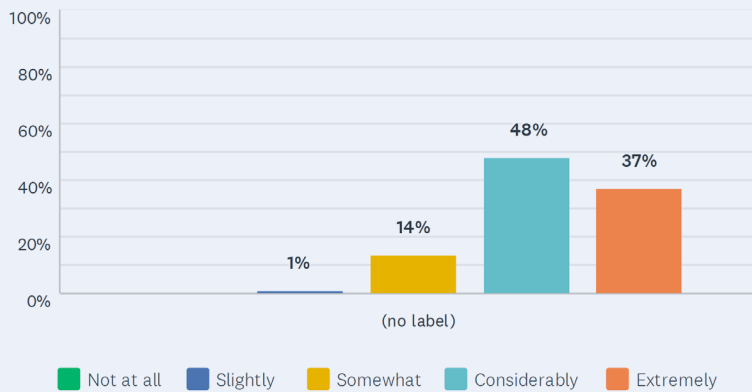
But don't listen to us: listen to what sales reps have to say. Over the last four years, we've captured the data to back up our claims. We've conducted nearly 10,000 surveys of sales reps, and time and again, they've raved about the platform.

Take, for example, our 2019 SurveyMonkey data, which is representative of the universe of data that we've collected.

<sup>9</sup>Freifeld, L. (2019, November 6). 2019 Training Industry Report. <https://trainingmag.com/trgmag-article/2019-training-industry-report>.

## Q1 How helpful and informative did you find this PTM?

Answered: 1,948 Skipped: 9

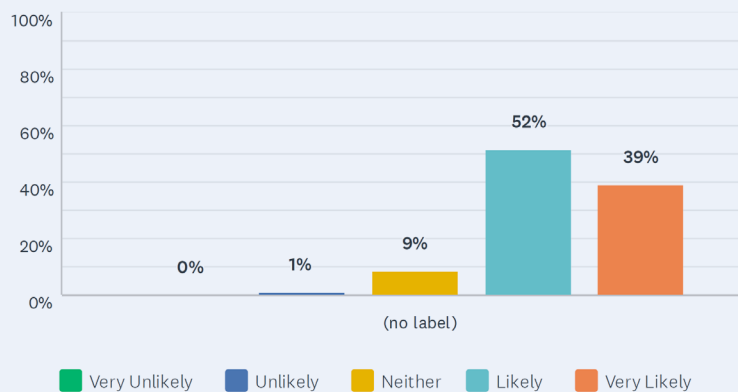


The vast majority of sales reps rated our PTMs as considerably (48%) or extremely (37%) helpful and informative.

Source: TechScholar 2019 SurveyMonkey Data.

## Q2 Based on this PTM how likely is it that you will introduce these products to a current or new customer

Answered: 1,942 Skipped: 15

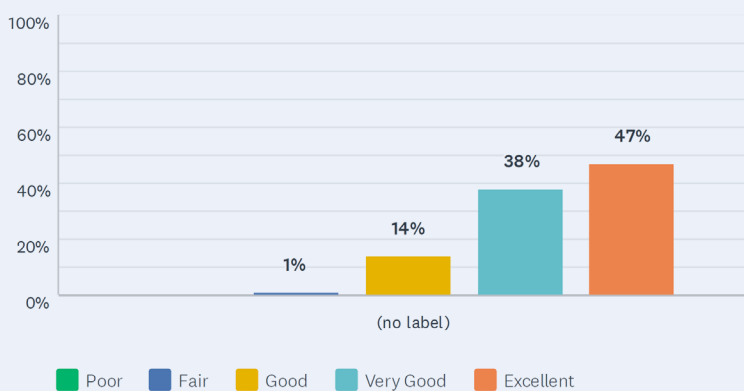


The majority—91%—of sales reps said they were likely (52%) or very likely (39%) to introduce products they learned about during a PTM to clients.

Source: TechScholar 2019 SurveyMonkey Data.

## Q4 Please rate this TechScholar Campus on usability (i.e., account creation, login, ease of use, navigation) and your overall opinion

Answered: 1,944 Skipped: 13



Reps found our platform's usability—including account creation, login, navigation, and overall ease of use—very good (38%) or excellent (47%).

Source: TechScholar 2019 SurveyMonkey Data.

Our interviews of leading sales reps who have spent time with our platform echo these findings:

A vice president of product management and strategic alliances at the country's leading provider of barcode, mobile computing, and RFID solutions observed, "A lot of companies focus on tech specifications but don't go in depth on how you can uncover an opportunity or position yourself for the sale. TechScholar focuses on helping sales reps learn about their target customer's profile and the benefits and ROI for clients. At the end of the day, salespeople do need to highlight some specs, but specs don't teach us how to sell. TechScholar shows me how to talk about ways that products can make my customer's job easier."

A Senior Sales and Solutions Specialist with a leading Midwest technology sales and service company remarked, "The training materials were full of helpful knowledge, and they were accessible and easy to navigate. Best of all, the information was presented in a way that made it easy to remember, so I was able to easily share what I learned. TechScholar is focused on sharing what we need to know to close the deal."

A technical sales and solutions analyst working as a regional representative for a large technology organization commented, "The PTMs are really helpful; they're fairly short and bite-sized. I can complete one in 15 to 20 minutes, and they're geared toward the true sales professional. I've found the information has always been relevant when sales reps want to have a more engaging conversation with a prospect."

## Conclusion

Product sales training is essential to rep success. Without knowing how to sell a product, reps won't be comfortable selling it. That means they'll push products from another company that has offered them online product sales training, and with that training, they've obtained an edge over their competition.

While reps are working in the field or reaching customers virtually, the easiest, most convenient, and most effective modality for delivering product sales training that leads to higher revenue is e-learning.

# TechScholar™

TechScholar, founded in 2009, creates professionally prepared, web delivered Product Sales Training for some of the most widely recognized tech companies in the world.



FUJIFILM

brother  
at your side



lenovo

LEXMARK

plantronics.

Fellowes



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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