

16 Critical Questions to Ask Before Investing in Sales Training



Insanity: Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. (*A. Einstein*)

An estimated 5 billion dollars is spent annually by American businesses to train sales professionals. Amazingly, research indicates that as many as 80% of companies have no measurement framework in place to determine how much the training investment actually impacts business operations and results. In addition, studies have shown that 86% of knowledge retention is lost within 90 days of sales training events without specific reinforcement vehicles and integration with business practices.

And yet thousands of companies continue to take a “train and hope” mindset, with little consideration for legitimate success criteria. Before investing in the next “fix the sales force” initiative, make sure that you can answer the tough questions that play a critical role in training success or failure.

1. Does the sales training fit with the overall sales strategy (or strategies) that your company is implementing (e.g., a solutions-focused sales strategy)?

What if it doesn't? Then it's likely that the methods and curriculum won't fit the desired sales approach, and will fail to be adopted by the sales organization

2. Have you defined a *buyer-aligned* sales process (or processes) that the training is intended to support, including specific activities and verifiable outcomes for each step of the process?

What if you haven't? Then the training won't be integrated into a daily sales approach that impacts the on-going activities and behavior of the sales team. Forecasts that are not based on customer verifiable outcomes will continue to be unreliable.

3. Have you defined specific methodologies (“how-to’s”) that are required to support the sales strategy and buyer-aligned process.

What if you haven’t? Then you don’t have real criteria to drive the needed training curriculum, and essential methods won’t be learned and put into practice by sales professionals.

4. Does the training offered include support for all key methodologies required for success, potentially including sales execution, territory targeting, account planning, and opportunity management, prospecting, and negotiating?

What if it doesn’t? Then key skills and knowledge areas may not be addressed, and sales people will be unable to execute on critical areas of the sales process.

5. Does the training approach provide a formal methodology, education, and consulting on sales process *implementation*?

What if it doesn’t? Then your organization won’t understand and address the key barriers to process and methodology integration with your business – limited adoption is the likely outcome.

6. Does the training curriculum provide distance learning (e-learning) support for **all** key selling methodologies?

What if it doesn’t? Then it will be impossible to provide continual learning and reinforcement for critical methods and skills.

7. Does the training program provide an integrated Learning Management System (LMS) that allows central administration and monitoring of all training activity (instructor led and e-learning)?

What if it doesn’t? Then it will be difficult to plan and administer training and continual learning activities across the organization and geographies.

8. Are **all** methodologies required to support an end-to-end sales process “pre-integrated” with the core sales execution training?

What if they aren't? Then it will be costly and time consuming to provide integrated methods and training for the sales force – or sales people will be effective at only parts of the overall sales process.

9. Can you incorporate your own best practices into the methodologies and training curriculum (including e-learning) that are being provided by the training firm?

What if you can't? Then much of the training will lack relevance and existing best practices – leading to limited (if any) sustained adoption by the sales team.

10. Does the training program provide a skills assessment offering that can objectively determine how well existing sales and management skills support the desired sales strategy and process?

What if it doesn't? Then much of the training may not be aligned with specific skills and knowledge needs of the sales team.

11. Does the curriculum include management and coaching training (and e-learning) that align with process and methodology training for sales people?

What if it doesn't? Then sales managers will not be equipped to effectively manage the defined sales process, and will not be effective coaches and mentors for the sales team.

12. Does the vendor provide a complete metrics framework that measures reaction to training, comprehension of materials, field application levels, leading performance indicators, and lagging performance indicators?

What if they don't? Then it won't be possible to understand and measure the effectiveness of the training investment, or which training and learning components are driving key performance improvements.

13. Does the vendor provide a complete set of sales tools that align with the desired sales process and supporting methodologies?

What if they don't? Then sales people will lack the necessary templates and job aids to efficiently practice and reinforce new selling methods – limited adoption will be the likely outcome.

14. Does the vendor provide training for marketing and sales alignment to ensure that sales-enabled messages are incorporated into sales tools?

What if they don't? Then marketing processes and outputs won't align with the sales methodology, and key marketing messages won't be incorporated into sales tools.

15. Does the vendor provide the ability to integrate key process and methodology content directly into the CRM system, so that technology-enablement reinforces and measures the desired sales approach?

What if they don't? Then technology investment will fail to reinforce sustained adoption of the desired sales process and methodologies – both the training and technology investments will fail to deliver their potential impact.

16. For global companies, does the vendor provide all forms of training in all essential international languages, as well as provide global delivery services?

What if they don't? Then it won't be possible to deliver essential training and continual learning to international sales professionals and managers.



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