A practical guide for sales training

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Intro

This guide will discuss the three fundamental activities any starting or scaling business should implement in their sales training processes.

Sales training is often approached as a drive-through - you get in, tell the sales coach what you want and get out. While this method can get you short-term results, sales training should be approached as an ongoing process. Why is that?
Sales training requires you to master specific skills that can't be taught in one day and executed the next day correctly. It often requires changing the behaviour of adults that are well set in their way of doing things.

You can approach sales training from two different perspectives. The first is if you have the internal resources to plan and execute sales training properly. The second perspective is when you don't have the resources to make it yourself, and in that case, you will have to outsource.

This guide will discuss the three fundamental activities any starting or scaling business should implement in their sales training processes. Both of them can be achieved internally or by outsourcing.

Set up your goals

You need to get a clear idea on what you want to get out of the sales training.

As a sales leader or owner of your company, you need to get a clear idea on what you want to get out of the sales training. It goes for both whether or not you want to build your own sales training or you want to hire a professional. If you want to avoid spending more of your finances, know this before hiring an external coach.

There can be numbers of indicators to measure that can differ from company to company. It can be overwhelming and confusing to know where to start, especially when starting your own business.

You can take inspiration from what one of our clients was measuring. We looked at three main KPIs with our previous client: revenue, number of closed deals, and new leads.

Our client was selling a SaaS product, and he needed to increase the conversion rate on booked meetings to signed contract. After receiving proper training, sales reps increased the conversion rate by 250%, directly impacting the increase in revenue by 250%. The size of closed deals increased from an equivalent of 2,000€ to 4,500€.

Sales reps were more skilled at figuring out their clients' needs and effectively converting them into paying customers. By doing so, we achieved not only increased sales revenue but at the same time, we cut customer acquisition costs.

Sales architecture and structuring your team

To properly enable your sales team to do their job, you need to structure your sales processes.

Creating an architecture behind your sales strategy is crucial for your success. What this structure represents is a sales process that predictably converts demand into revenue. Within this framework, you need to identify repeatable sales touchpoints required to go through the customer journey from a new meeting to a win or a closed deal.

Sounds easy, right? Choose the first touchpoint as an intro call, which gives you a quick identification whether the leads are interested or not. If they're interested, you can set up a follow-up email or call and by the end, you'll end up with paying customers.

If only it were that easy. To properly enable your sales team to do their job, you need to structure your sales processes. When you get this step right, your sales team will know what it takes to succeed in their role. You can start by identifying four different sections: value, sales process, buyer's decision process and impactful conversations.

For each section, you need to ask yourself these questions:

1. Is it essential to this sales role?
2. How does it look like when performed correctly?
3. What is it that we are not doing in this role currently, but sellers at other companies are doing?

Value

In the heart of your sales architecture is a section focusing on the value. When your sales rep can create value, your team achieves the goal. Creating value should be centered around your customers and their needs, everything that you do has to be customer centric. One of the areas, where we see a lot of companies doing it wrong, is in their lead cycle. Companies tend to have focus on themselves and what they see as the best steps. Do yourself a favor, investigate what the buyer's journey looks like, and tailor your own journey to fit those needs.

Sales process

Sales process is divided into six different steps, but they all are connected to the concept of value.

1. Create a valuable pipeline
To find and create value for potential buying customers, you need to focus on your prospecting. Prospecting is often the first time leads hear about you, make the first impression count.

2. Discover the challenges/needs
To fully understand and convert leads from the initial phases into the later stages, you need to not only uncover the challenges that they're facing. Sometimes you need to activate and reactivate them throughout the process to ensure you are both moving in the same direction. This is often referred to as understanding the needs of the leads.

3. Craft solution
Once your sales reps understand the needs, they have to create a solution that is tailored to the needs of the lead, ensuring value.

4. Present
Your sales team has to clearly communicate the solution's full value so the buyer will fully understand it.

5. Negotiate
This can be tricky. From your point of view you want to drive up your margins, meanwhile maintaining a good relationship with the customer. Be very clear about the goals of the negotiation, so your negotiator knows what to be aware of.

6. Win

Winning is the final goal of selling, but it doesn't happen easily. Take the steps mentioned above into account meanwhile dealing with the fact that throughout the entire process you are fighting against your competitors, to win the lead and convert them into paying customers.

Buyer's decision process

To create a rapport with your potential new buyer, you need to understand the buyer's perspective and the process that ends up with a purchase contract.

1. Problem recognition

Every purchase begins with a buyer searching for a solution to a problem that needs to be solved.

2. Information search

Buyers here are analyzing their situation and the causes of their problem. When they define the problem, they start to consider their options, filter their choices, and evaluate them for feasibility. At this stage, buyers can use sellers to discover their challenges and needs.

3. Evaluation of alternatives

When buyers reach this step, they have determined they can't live without a solution. They put together the data they collected about different solutions from various suppliers, and they compare them against each other.

4. Decision

In this stage, buyers decide whether or not they buy your solution.

5. Closing the deal

Here, start the negotiations, and if you're successful, they'll sign the purchase contract.

6. Post-purchase evaluation

After implementing the solution, buyers will evaluate the whole buying process and decide whether to continue with the contract or search for different solutions. In this step, you will have the possibility to upsell other features and products you might have in your portfolio.

Impactful conversations

The first half of leading an impactful conversion with your spotential new buyers is discovering their needs and offering a solution. By focusing on the buyer's pain points and problems, you'll uncover half of the story.

The second part of the story is to uncover their future objectives and goals. Buyers are typically thinking about their business's future as much as about the problems they're trying to solve. Ask questions focused on the future that will help you understand the scaling aspect of your buyer's business.

After you're aware of the pain points and business goals, the next step would be to understand the impact of what would happen if the client won't solve his problem or not achieve the goal. Will your client's business get any worse if he won't solve the issue? How will it affect his bottom line? If he won't achieve his goal, is he going to lose market share? Will his competitor get ahead? Will he lose the potential to grow in his existing market? By understanding the impact caused by your client's problem, you'll be able to establish the real challenge this client is facing. If you make the effect clear, your client will realize the gap between his current situation and the future he wants.

To communicate the impact, consider these three subjects:

1. Quantify the impact
Make a business case where you help your client realize the financial advantages. For instance, share with him how your solution will cut his customer acquisition costs by 30% and increase the number of new leads by 20% while upholding the conversion rate.

2. Decision maker's impact
In sales processes that take longer than a week to be successful, it is a great idea to know the number of decision-makers involved. Having this knowledge will provide you with a competitive edge because you can control your communication better.

3. Consider the alternatives' impact
You need to know the impact the buyer will experience by working with you and the impact when the buyer would work with an alternative. Perhaps your solution is more expensive than the alternative, but the long-term benefits could outweigh the short-term savings.

Aspects that influence sales rep's performance

1. Sales Leadership
It's up to the sales leadership to build a well-defined architecture of the overall sales processes to enable your team to achieve maximum potential

2. Sales management
Supporting each sales rep to reach their potential daily.

3. Sales performance environment
Enabling sales reps to perform effectively and provide them with tools to win deals.

Tailoring the sales training

Tailoring your training to your sales reps' needs can be tricky and confusing from the very beginning.

If you're starting your own business, it can be challenging to create a functioning sales architecture in a short amount of time. On top of that, to make the sales training impactful, you must tailor the content. Certain topics are universal. However, your sales reps need to have customized examples, exercises, tools, and motivation factors that will enable them to perform on the top level.

Tailoring your training to your sales reps' needs can be tricky and confusing from the very beginning. You can get inspiration for sales training from one of our coaches.

He started by understanding the overall architecture behind the sales processes. A few clients didn't have that implemented, so he helped them make quick fixes to get started. Then he was introduced to the individual sales reps and the whole sales team.

During the first day, he needed to know what sales reps were working on, what processes seemed to work well, and identify the potential gaps. He followed by understanding the customers' needs. From that data, he made practical exercises where one of them was a practice call. First, practice calls were between the coach and sales rep from perspectives as a seller and a customer. After a day or two, he assigned most sales reps to call low scored leads that the client could afford to burn.

Fully customizable sales training from yTalent

Your team will benefit from expert's guidance on best sales practices that will drive your wins and revenue.

You and your sales team will enjoy a fully tailored sales training program suitable for starting and scaling businesses. Your team will benefit from expert's guidance on best sales practices that will drive your wins and revenue.

Features of yTalent's training program

1. Tailored sales training for individuals and teams
2. Tailored sales leadership training
3. Onboarding your new sales rep
4. A sales strategy review and its optimization
5. Practical assignments and exercises
6. Sales productivity assessment
7. Reporting

Unleash the full Sales potential of your team

Support your team to master sales conversations, fill their pipelines, increase win rates, and drive your company's growth by signing in for yTalent's sales training program.

About our sales coach

Jakob Hanssen is a founder and CEO of yTalent who helps clients unleash their sales teams' full potential. He has more than 12 years of experience in sales and sales leadership positions. His coaching methods brought clients a 250% revenue increase, and the value of closed deals increased from 2000€ to 4500€.

Book a meeting with Jakob

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