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While sales organizations make large investments in sales training, most of the valuable lessons are quickly forgotten soon after everyone leaves the training session. Progressive companies are driving long-term results with technology to provide continuous reinforcement and coaching of new skills and behaviors.

Rolling out a new sales approach requires a significant investment in training and consistent reinforcement to attain the desired impact. According to research from Corporate Executive Board (CEB), U.S. companies spent more than $5 billion in 2012 on sales training, including developing sales methodologies and messaging frameworks.

While there’s a willingness to invest in training to help more sales reps close more deals more often, 50% of companies report that they struggle to achieve consistency in sales execution despite training, according to the SAVO Sales Maturity Benchmark survey.

Even though the sales team can exhibit passion about adopting a new way of selling during educational sessions, some sales professionals tend to revert to comfortable habits once they return to the job of selling. Some sales reps have been successful using what they consider tried-and-true approaches, so they don’t see a need to change. Others require some prompting and guidance to make the best use of what they have learned, to understand how to make the training actionable, and to integrate it into their daily selling activities.

Training is also important when onboarding new reps. They need to get up to speed quickly on the company’s sales processes and the resources available to help them start pursuing opportunities as quickly as possible.

50% of companies report that they struggle to achieve consistency in sales execution despite training, according to the SAVO Sales Maturity Benchmark survey.
Everyone has a stake in reinforcing the methodologies outlined in sales training:

Sales reps need training on new sales processes — what key tasks to perform in what order — but they also need ongoing value-added recommendations and coaching on how to improve their chances of winning deals. They can benefit from benchmarked insights on what drives successful outcomes, and recommendations on the relevant people, assets and messaging that will help them close deals. Sellers require the necessary tools to boost productivity through tasks, such as social intelligence, team selling and relationship mapping.

**Sales leadership** desires solid metrics to identify areas for improvement across sales regions or across the entire sales team. Leaders need to connect verifiable outcomes to sales results and embed those insights as part of technology-driven best practices. They also need greater visibility into the likelihood of a deal resulting in a sale.

**Sales operations** is looking to make the most of the investment in sales methodology development, process and training through consistent coaching and recommendations. After the sales training has concluded, they need a technology infrastructure that guides, prescribes and coaches best practice sales execution. More accurate projections about the probability of a sale closing also enable more accurate pipeline forecasts, which is at the heart of what’s expected from sales operations.

**Marketing** is being charged with supporting sales throughout the entire customer buying journey, so it needs to ensure messaging is aligned to specific types of sales opportunities and defined sales stages. It also needs to measure the usage and understand the effectiveness of these assets.

**This e-book will cover:**

- Gaps in the current methods of sales training and reinforcement;
- The growing need to measure the effectiveness of sales training, and how poor adoption and adherence can impact deal quality;
- The connection between sales training, reinforcement and forecast accuracy; and
- Next-generation tools to provide reinforcement and coaching to get the desired results from training investments.
Companies spend an average of $3,400 yearly on training per sales rep, according to CEB, mostly on classroom-style events. But are companies getting the most out of their investments?

Despite their best efforts, most companies don’t see visible or sustained improvements in sales results following training, or they lack the ability to measure the impact. There are a number of reasons that sales training does not yield the desired results. One key reason for the low return on investment is a lack of retention of the information presented during the training session.

While everyone gets excited at the prospect of closing more deals with the help of a new sales methodology, the reality is that much of what is taught is lost quickly after the one- to three-day training session is over. Whether it is a new sales rep learning about the sales process or existing reps being introduced to a new sales methodology, it is difficult to retain that information through traditional learning. According to Huthwaite research, 87% of what sales reps are taught in a classroom setting is forgotten in three months.

Traditionally, what is presented in a classroom environment — via lectures, books, binders and role playing — requires the salespeople to then make it actionable. It is up to the sales reps to incorporate it into their daily sales workflow, and it’s also up to sales management to coach. If there’s no underlying reinforcement platform, program or tools, much of that information gets lost.

According to IDC, companies that train reps on new sales processes without technology reinforcement find that only 50% are making quota. When technology and coaching are used to support what has been taught, the number of reps making their quota rises to 90%.

Despite their best efforts, most companies don’t see visible or sustained improvements in sales results following training, or they lack the ability to measure the impact.
Periodic sales training events will continue to be a preferred method for rolling out a new sales process and for getting new reps up to speed. Many of the sales challenges that are addressed by these classroom-style sessions remain, and the investments still yield a number of benefits from a team-building and motivational perspective.

Companies either hire outside sales skills companies or develop internal training materials to educate their sales team on certain competencies. Training session goals include customized aspects of the company’s go-to market strategy, how to handle client engagement, and then, ultimately, how to move the prospect through the buying process.

However, as with all expenditures, companies need to keep close tabs to ensure a return on their investment. Sales training, followed by technology-driven coaching and reinforcement of best practices, has been shown to yield the best results.

Marketing can make every effort to produce the right copy or assets and provide suggestions on sales scenarios, but if sales team members aren’t following that methodology, it is all for naught.

It is not enough to provide access to various resources and allow sales reps to search for the content they think will help them close the deal. It is much more effective to provide ongoing technology-based coaching, enabling the system to make suggestions about when to share specific pieces of content based on the prospect’s behavior and their point in the buying cycle, among other factors.
As any sales operations person can tell you, it is a challenge to keep the data in the customer relationship management (CRM) system healthy. The sales operations team is tasked with driving adoption, generating the reports and creating forecasts. While companies have invested $228 billion in CRM systems in the past 10 years, according to CEB, many lack the true forecasting capabilities necessary to accurately predict future sales.

Companies have made extensive investments in their CRM systems, and sales management and finance executives use them to gauge the size and velocity of the pipeline. Salespeople are required to enter information into the CRM system, but many see little value or return on this task. They are essentially left to provide their own opinion — primarily a gut feeling — about the likelihood of a deal closing.

While the goal is for salespeople to use the CRM system as the hub of their business activities throughout the day, oftentimes, this is not the reality. A system for sales methodology reinforcement and deal quality that provides two-way integration with CRM can add value by incorporating best practices; dynamic recommendations of people, assets and other supporting documents; and ultimately, productivity-enhancing tools.

Because the CRM falls short of the goals of complete visibility into deals, it is difficult for marketers to determine which assets are most effective at various stages in the sales cycle. And, they lack insights into how the sales team is using those assets to close deals.

The data that salespeople input into the system does not always provide a complete picture of where the prospect is in the sales cycle and the likelihood of a deal closing. By providing more signals — such as which assets have been shared with the prospect, which key tasks have been completed, which verifiable outcomes have been satisfied, what pace is an opportunity progressing through the stages, and which key stakeholders have been engaged during the process — sales leadership can get more accurate insights into deal quality.
Conclusion

Best-in-class organizations are using technologies that deliver what sellers need when and where they need it, and on the device of their choosing. By using technology to embed the new skills and behaviors into the daily workflow and leverage best practices, insights into seller behavior and successful selling patterns, everyone in the organization benefits.

Sales reps receive dynamic recommendations on assets and experts to help them advance a deal, coaching to help them execute best practices and reinforce new sales methodologies, and productivity-enhancing tools to help them execute high-impact tasks more efficiently and effectively.

For sales leadership and sales operations, a technology-driven approach to training reinforcement and deal quality brings structure and predictability to the process of forecasting. They gain visibility into process adherence, progress and deal quality as measured by an independent metric, instead of sales reps’ own estimation of the probability of a deal closing.

The marketing team is assured that the assets it is creating are being used at the right stage in the process to move opportunities through the pipeline more efficiently and close more deals. Marketers also receive feedback on what assets are most effective at various stages in the pipeline and sales scenarios. This input helps them refine the content to support the sales team to turn more opportunities into deals.

Technology-driven reinforcement, along with a dynamic recommendation engine that points salespeople to the right assets to share with the seller based on key attributes, will turn more opportunities into deals won.

By using technology to embed the new skills and behaviors into the daily workflow and leverage best practices, insights into seller behavior and successful selling patterns, everyone in the organization benefits.
SAVO is the market leader in sales enablement. Our SaaS solution uses the power of content management, team selling, RFP/proposal automation, mobility and insight to harness companywide knowledge to deliver professional selling. Smarter Selling™ methods align sales, marketing and operations to prescribe materials, coaching, tools and experts at the right time in the buying process. SAVO is helping customers close the performance gaps in their business. Driving higher profits, volume and market share goals.