

# 5 Ways to Drastically Overhaul Your Sales Training Program and Boost ROI

A Guide for IT Staffing CEOs and Sales Directors

*By Dan Fisher*





## About the Author .....

Dan Fisher is the founder and owner of Menemsha Group, a sales enablement solutions company dedicated to helping IT staffing and service firms improve sales win rates, accelerate their sales cycles, and increase overall quota attainment. Dan is a 20-year sales veteran and thought leader in the IT staffing and consulting industry and has authored the only proprietary sales methodology designed exclusively for selling IT staffing services.

In 2014, Dan launched Quota King, a SaaS-based sales application that plugs in with your CRM that visually and intuitively prompts sales reps to follow and execute a repeatable and scalable sales methodology in a wizard-like fashion, all from within their CRM/ATS application. In 2015 Menemsha Group launched a SaaS-based online learning management system to help IT staffing firms improve their new hire onboarding and training experience and to accelerate new hire ramp up.

Dan is also a popular speaker at industry events like TechServe Alliance and Staffing World, as well as sales conferences and leadership retreats. Dan has worked with over 350 IT staffing and professional services firms and has invested over 5,000 hours in coaching thousands of sales professionals in the IT staffing industry.

Prior to launching Menemsha Group in July 2008, Dan worked for Kelly IT Resources, Alliance Consulting, and Oracle in various sales and sales leadership roles.



## The IT staffing industry is on the rise .....

Thousands of firms have already been established across the country and many more are springing up as the demand for skilled IT consultants continues to increase.

Many of these firms are founded by people with years of experience working for other staffing firms as either a sales rep or recruiter, but with very little experience growing businesses and creating an effective sales process. Eighty-five percent of the IT staffing firms I work with rely on one or two key people for 80 percent or more of their total revenue.

Clearly, to grow beyond the startup phase and secure a greater share of the \$28.9 billion in value Staffing Industry Analysts projects for the IT staffing market in 2016, firms need to create and nurture a team of top-performing sales reps who can consistently bring in new business.

To build a top-performing sales force, firms need the ability to effectively onboard new hires and equip existing reps with the skills and knowledge needed to beat the competition. Getting there requires an effective — and cost-effective — training program. But, to say the approach many companies are taking to sales training and talent development is flawed would be an understatement.



## What's Going On? .....

Why are the training programs of so many IT staffing firms hurting their chances for revenue growth and ROI, both in the short and long terms? Four reasons:

### 1. Too Much Focus on Speed, Too Little Focus on Effectiveness

From what we see, most IT staffing sales leaders expect their reps to “pay for their seat” within 90 days or sooner. The result is a stunted onboarding process that provides way too little information (usually through “shadowing”), or way too much (through a massive information dump of pitch decks, data sheets, CRM documentation, and company history). What’s more, the information they’re given is often not the right information for the reps at the right time in their development.



### 2. No Dedicated and Effective Sales Training Program

Most small and midsize companies don’t have a sales training program in the first place. Companies that do aren’t usually focused on the right skills or don’t teach them in a logical order.

### 3. Reliance on Ineffective Shadow Training

The simplest and most common form of sales training is shadow training. Shadow training assumes new reps will somehow absorb the highly-developed skills of veterans by watching and listening.

As I’ll discuss later in the paper, results from this approach are usually poor, at best. Shadow training keeps reps in their comfort zones, rather than helping them improve in the areas where they’re weak. New reps, listening in on calls, don’t learn best practices, just the diverse sales styles and approaches of particular individuals.

### 4. Managers Can’t Provide Effective Training

When sales managers are asked to train other reps while maintaining their own books of business, including sales opportunities to nurture and close, it creates a heavy burden for them and is not scalable.

**Sales managers cannot be both “players” and “coaches.” Here are four reasons why:**

- **Sales managers are bringing in too much revenue.** Sales managers are usually the elite salespeople in the organization, and they may be directly responsible for a huge chunk of an IT staffing firm’s revenue. Because they’re the best, they are picked to lead training of new reps. But management is usually hesitant to pull their top performing reps away from closing deals to train new reps. Their time is too valuable for maintaining current financial results.

- **Misalignment of incentives.** The sales manager who is tasked to be the sales trainer and a sales producer is often paid better for the success of his or her personal book of business than for the success of their trainees. As a result, managers focus much of their time on their personal books of business and overlook training new reps.
- **Sales managers don't know how to train.** Just because someone can sell, it doesn't mean they can train. They're two different skillsets. Some sales leaders will be natural-born trainers, but most won't. In most cases, organizations simply haven't taught their key sales reps how to train.
- **Lack of time for developing talent.** Sales managers just don't have the spare time to devote to training new reps, so training and onboarding get neglected.
- **Sales managers don't lead by example.** When IT staffing firms launch a sales training program they typically only put their sales reps through the training — not the manager. When sales managers and executive leadership fail to enroll in a sales training program, it sends a strong message that training is really not that important. Sales managers should still complete the training to set a good example for other reps. This is critically important for getting the rest of the team to buy into training.

## This Impacts Your Bottom Line .....

While there's merit in having reps paying for their seat as soon as possible in the IT staffing industry, this is a short-sighted attitude. It sacrifices long-term effectiveness and revenue growth for short-term attempts at hitting ROI.

According to the Corporate Executive Board, with better training, most core sales professionals could see a **performance boost of 19 percent**. The same studies show that continuous training can yield up to 50 percent more net revenue per rep and ongoing coaching can improve sales performance by 90 percent.

***With the right training program, you can have these results at your firm.***

In the rest of this paper, I'll explore five different methods for restructuring your sales training program to transform your team into a high-performing sales engine. Then I'll talk about making it sustainable, so your business continues to grow thanks to the ROI boost you get from overhauling your training program.



## 5 Steps to a Better Sales Training Program

Many IT staffing firms provide one or two days of training — usually not well-managed or monitored and certainly not measured — before sending their new hires to shadow a senior rep for a few days.

Other firms simply flood new hires with information — CRM documentation, sales playbooks, pitch decks — and expect them to teach themselves on the job. It's too much for them to retain and often the wrong information at the wrong time. Reps don't need to learn how to close a deal when they're still making introductory calls.

Given the complexity and competitive nature of IT staffing sales, this simply isn't going to cut it.

**Here are five ways most IT staffing firms can improve their sales training programs for better ROI, more effective reps, and significant business growth.**



### 1. Create Job Scorecards

Employees are more satisfied when expectations are clearly stated up front, and based on benchmarks instead of subjectivity. Many IT staffing firms, however, do not have a defined set of expectations. The challenge arises when this problem is allowed to fester while the company grows. Expectations are key, and they're what every strong sales organization is built upon.

To avoid bad hires, improve retention, and ensure you're investing your training dollars the right way, job scorecards need to be created for each position. Job scorecards should detail the specific expectations for each role, including the revenue and gross profit quota, daily/weekly/monthly metrics, and KPI's.

After defining what success looks like for a well-trained rep, a job scorecard should map out expectations about what the rep will need to know — at each stage of their development — to get there. The easiest way to do this is to reverse engineer the skills and competencies a rep should have acquired by the 30-, 60-, 90-, and 120-plus-day timeframes.

Job scorecards should also identify the obstacles new reps may encounter while on their path to success. This will help you allocate training resources and choose who needs to be involved. It will also help executive leadership and sales managers manage their own expectations about what is reasonable to expect or not expect.

***You can use your job scorecard for interviewing candidates, as well as coaching existing employees. They can also serve as the framework for managers and their direct reports to rate performance.***



## 2. Map Out Your Sales Process

Salespeople learn best in the context of something they can relate to. An effective sales training program is one that is constructed around your company's sales process. In other words, your sales training program should align with the steps of how you sell your IT staffing services and your customer's buying journey (how they engage salespeople and the steps they complete in their buying process, with your strengths against competitors and responses to objections).

Your sales process should highlight the high-level steps and activities that need to be completed by both the rep and the customer. You need to define, document and configure your CRM/ATS application to automate your sales process so that all sales reps, regardless of location will follow one unified sales process and speak a common sales language. At a high level your sales process should include (configuration and workflow):

- Lead creation
- Lead qualification and conversion
- Lead nurturing
- Opportunity qualification
- Clearly defined stages that are aligned with the customer's purchasing process
- Opportunity management
- Customer segmentation

**If you don't have a sales process in place, then you essentially have no way to train a new hire.**

## 3. Stop Shadow Training

Shadow training is the most common form of sales training used in IT staffing — because it's easy. But it's also lazy and ineffective.

Shadow training requires organizations to do very little of the necessary groundwork to build a training program that will deliver the desired results and expected ROI. The above two steps (*building a job scorecard and mapping your sales process*) are necessary to create a thriving sales program, but they're often ignored by organizations that make shadowing the focal point of their training program.

If you're shadow training at your firm, here are few questions to think about:

- Under shadow training, how does the new hire learn to execute the best practices that are the weaknesses of the reps they shadowed?
- If your rep shadows multiple sales people on your sales team, how do you ensure a consistent message?
- How do you ensure there is standardization to the knowledge transfer with shadow training?
- How do you measure and track performance?

**While new hires may pick up a couple of tips through shadow training, they're only getting exposed to the personal sales styles of the reps they shadow. Remember, even top performers have weaknesses.**

Your sales training is only effective to the extent that it is assimilated into your daily sales process and actively monitored and measured. Whatever good habits your reps pick up during shadow training, if they don't have established best practices and a mapped-out sales process to fall back on, there's no guarantee they'll be able to remember and repeat what they learned.

Shadow training can lead to a vicious cycle that can harm the effectiveness of your sales training program, as well as the performance of new hires. In this scenario, rather than having a cohesive, predictable sales force, you end up with 3, 5, or 10 reps all selling different ways, at varying levels of development and effectiveness.

From our experience this is the recipe that prevents IT staffing firms from scaling their business. This is the behavior that stunts their growth. Even worse, when it comes time to sell the business, owners don't get a very high multiple because the business is so reliant on those one or two key individuals. So a better, more effective training program — not based on shadowing — is an investment in your business.

Even if you've defined your sales process and created a job scorecard, shadow training will largely render those steps ineffective for the reasons listed above. Worse, it'll be hard to track the performance of their sales effectiveness because you have not defined one specific standard.

***For example, if your rep is doing well, is it because they shadowed Dan, Gerry, or Kerri? If they're struggling, is it because of something they learned or didn't learn when shadowing Dan, Gerry or Kerri?***

***Shadow training can't answer these questions. This severely limits the upper range of productivity and effectiveness and prevents team members from reaching their true potential.***

#### 4. Create a Regimented Milestone-Based Training Program

The ideal sales training program should accompany a new rep through his or her first months on the job, lasting at least 90 days and long as a year. During that time, establish training "milestones" for your reps. Have them work toward developing specific skills and meeting specific goals within specific, pre-determined timeframes.

Although every company has a unique situation, the information you compile making job scorecards and mapping your sales process will help you identify and organize each milestone.

For example, once reps achieve the ability to flawlessly execute a call plan using your introductory call script and leveraging your value proposition, they should begin selling and going through the training for it at the same time.

When they're ready to schedule and attend sales meetings, they should be going through training and documentation that focuses exclusively on scheduling and running sales meetings — but only then, not three months before or after they start scheduling and attending sales meetings.

To ensure the success of your program, ongoing lessons should include in-depth content specific to respective sales roles and the sales process. A centralized repository for all job aids, sales playbooks, case studies, and other enablement assets should support this.

***The completion of milestones should trigger training that's relevant to the next milestone.***

### **Using Gamification to Test Your Reps Readiness**

If you want to ensure that your reps are ready before they take on a new responsibility in your sales process, you also need to include quizzes and exams that check for knowledge and reinforce what they need to do when they go hands-on. This is called gamification.

Gamification of your sales training encourages the learners to engage with the content in different ways. It creates healthy competition and rewards desired behaviors, encouraging sales reps to repeat those behaviors, and enabling them to retain more information.

Research from Aberdeen Group revealed that 31 percent more first-year reps achieved quota when supported with game mechanics. If implemented correctly, gamification educates, influences, and rewards the desired sales behavior of a sales organization.

## **5. Track the Effectiveness of Your Training**

One of your reps closed a big deal and you concluded they were fully trained to sell effectively. But then you were surprised when they began to lose deal after deal.

### **What happened? You were tracking the wrong metrics.**

Only **40% of sales enablement programs are measured**, according to a survey by Vantage Point. Without a rigorous focus on metrics, budgets can get reallocated and the credibility of the initiative can be disrupted. This is especially true for sales enablement, since salespeople themselves are so tightly connected to a defined number.

In marketing, traffic and leads are your go-to metrics. In sales, it is revenue generated and number of deals closed. But what are the best metrics for sales training and sales enablement? There's no one metric that can tell you the business impact of your sales training efforts.

Because of the nature of sales, most companies track high-level performance numbers (such as number of calls, conversions into opportunities, and sales win rates), but few are doing anything to measure training progress, the training program's performance, or sales effectiveness. As a result, IT staffing firms struggle to understand whether a rep's aptitude is increasing or not.

***In reality, simply closing a deal does not demonstrate a rep's knowledge of the sales process or best practices, or their ability to sell.***

By tying your achievement to real-world sales results you redirect focus to just how important the sales enablement function is. You drive renewed credibility, and you get a powerful force to argue for budget for sales enablement tools and programs.

There will likely be external factors influencing the business results metrics you need to track. You cannot claim an improvement in quota attainment is solely due to the efforts of sales enablement and training. Your training may have played a crucial role, but maybe timing or the design of your job scorecards played a role, as well.



## To measure the success of your sales training program, these are the five metrics you should track:

### 1. Quota Attainment

Each salesperson should be measured based on if and how soon they hit their quota.

In any team, you'll have the stars that exceed that number, those that are close, and those that lag. One of the goals of sales training and sales enablement is to bring the "B and C players" up to the same level of effectiveness as your A players. If you can increase the number of reps that hit quota, it will have a massive impact on your top-line (and buy-in across the sales organization).

But is this metric really influenced by sales training and sales enablement? Yes. According to Aberdeen Research, companies that adopted best practices across their sales team (i.e. sales enablement) had double the quota attainment of their peers.

Each sales enablement program that reallocates rep time toward core selling, each tool that cuts wasted effort, and each best practice that helps make sales reps more effective nets more quota attainment across the team.

### 2. Time to Hit Quota

One of the most common roles for sales training is to onboard new salespeople. Simply measuring the number of new reps that have gone through training programs is not enough. Nor is measuring the number of hours allocated to training for your new team members. After all, the retention rate for sales training leaves much to be desired. According to Sales Performance International, new reps lose 84 percent of what they learn in sales training within 90 days.

If simply going through the training process isn't enough, what is an effective measure? You want your new reps to not be thought of as new anymore. You want them to be as effective as the rest of your team and fast.

Effective sales training and onboarding programs will focus on getting your new sales reps using best practice as quickly as possible and making them effective team members. So, measure how quickly

new reps are matching quota attainment for the rest of your team. This metric is particularly important for organizations that are scaling fast and need new recruits to be quickly productive.

### 3. Training engagement

Did your reps read their training documents? Did they watch the videos? Did they complete their exercises? Are they taking the quizzes and exams? How did they do? A learning management system may help with this.

### 4. Sales Win-Rate Percentage

Win-rate percentage is the number of deals you close divided by the total number of deals you put into your pipeline. It's the single most overlooked metric in sales.

Win-rate percentage gets to the heart and soul of your sales process, your sales training and onboarding program, and the effectiveness of your reps. When this number increases, you know your reps are improving.

This metric also dispels the misconception that sales is purely a numbers game. When reps improve sales win-rates, it proves they are doing so without having to do more or work harder to improve results

### 5. Sales Lead Conversion Rates

The key to building any strong sales funnel and achieving quota attainment begins with lead conversion. Sales need enough sales qualified leads (SQLs) to call on to hit quota. A core element in our sales methodology (and our sales metrics methodology) is the tracking and measurement of the number of new SQLs a sales rep adds to their CRM or ATS. A small variance in the conversion rate can have a massive impact on your funnel dynamics.

Providing a methodology and best practices (including scripting and training) that boost sales effectiveness for converting prospects to SQLs directly connects to actual sales rep productivity and sales results. Your sales training program is influencing conversion rates. But it's up to you to measure by how much.

## How to Make Your New Training Program Sustainable

Effectively transforming your existing sales force — whether they be junior or senior reps or managers — is a difficult task. But getting all aspects of sales training — expectations, processes, methodology, and performance management — correct could have a profound impact on the long-term performance of your organization.

People naturally resist changes to their comfortable work routines. New ideas and mindsets about how to work and an individual's role within the organization can create stress and uncertainty. In order for the sales transformation to permeate the entire company it needs to be ongoing, and it needs to be approached with the right methodology for implementing the changes.

You should expect to meet some resistance to making any sweeping changes. Even after you've implemented your new program, your existing employees may accidentally fall into old behaviors and routines that sabotage your program.

If you implement these changes with the wrong approach, you may fail at getting your employees bought-in and effective, whether that failures happens in the short-term or the mid- to long-term.

Deploying and getting your employees to engage in your new sales training program should be approached and managed as a change management initiative.



## What is change management?

Change management is the discipline of driving business results by changing behaviors. Successful change management is the practice of reducing and managing resistance to change when implementing a new program such as sales training. For the initiative to be successful, leaders and team members must understand the human dynamics of change and prepare for the emotional response it can generate.

You could invest lots of resources into planning and developing a world-class sales training program, but if you do not implement it correctly, ROI will almost always fall short. CSO Insights' 2009 Sales Optimization Report highlighted the importance of launching a dedicated change management initiative, rather than investing in a new program and then just hoping it takes hold:

***"If you are going to invest in training your salespeople, then the follow-up process needs to be in place for their managers to ensure that the training is being applied consistently and effectively by the reps in their daily workflow so that it becomes ingrained into the way in which they sell. Failing to do will minimize the ROI your company sees from your training investments."***



## The three phases of change management .....

Successful change management should include the following three phases, each of which can be applied to transforming your sales training program:

### 1. Plan to communicate the change

If you expect people to change their behaviors and routines, you'll need to communicate what, specifically, is being changed, why it's being changed, and how it's going to benefit them. Deploying a sales management training program devoid of any of these communication aspects will fail.

Gaining buy-in and enabling long-term change requires clarity. You need to show your reps "the promised land."

### 2. Plan for transitioning the change

Change is almost always met with resistance, particularly among people who have been doing something a certain way that has given them success (such your sales veterans). Just because they've been successful, however, doesn't mean it's the best way. There must be a plan in place to manage objections as you transition from the old system to the new one.

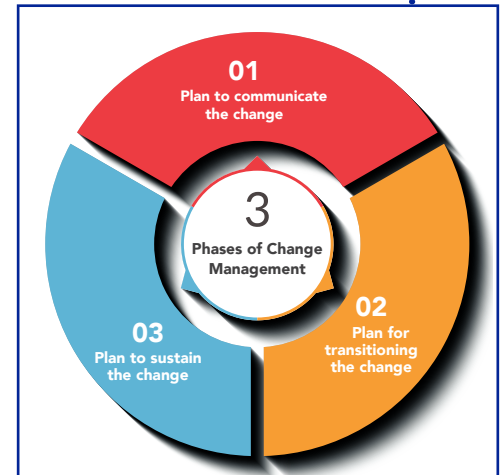
### 3. Plan to sustain the change

Overcoming objections to change is one thing, but sustaining those changes and changing behaviors is an entirely different and more difficult task. A plan must be in place to ensure salespeople don't go back to the previous way of doing things or retreat to their old habits. More often than not, the sustainment phase is where change management initiatives will succeed or fail. It is typically the sales leader who has the most influence on the outcome. Too many sales leaders think the training doesn't apply to them, when in reality they must be the model for the new desired behavior.

Following a strong process for communicating the plan, transitioning away from the outdated model, and sustaining the change can help to amplify the impact of your new sales training program.

It is important to remember that demonstrating an ROI of the sales training program, as well as the change management initiative requires having a strong set of metrics in place—as discussed in the previous section.

With the ability to baseline and then measure performance over time, you can show the impact on both an individual rep level and at an organizational level. It doesn't make sense to invest time and effort if you cannot quantify the results and use that information to make better decisions in the future.





## Follow These Steps to Stand Out in the ..... Crowded IT Staffing Industry

If you want to increase market share, attract and retain top talent, and differentiate from your competition, then following the steps in this eBook for building an effective sales training program should absolutely be a priority.

In this book, we discussed:

- Creating job scorecards.
- Mapping out your sales process.
- Stopping shadow training.
- Creating a regimented milestone-based training program.
- Track the effectiveness of your training.



We also talked about taking a change management approach to implementing your new sales training program, so it's sustainable.

If completing this seems like a much-needed, but massive, overhaul—one you're not prepared to implement internally, then you may need some help. There are many consultancies out there that can help IT staffing companies overhaul their sales process and sales training program.

However if you want a highly-experienced sales consultancy that focuses solely on IT staffing firms, and uses the latest in change management best practices, then Menemsha Group might be a fit.

We can help you design your job scorecards, develop your sales training program including the content and performance metrics, and build a change management plan that will significantly improve your ROI. Menemsha Group is the leader in the IT staffing sales training and consulting space, and has considerable experience helping firms shorten their sales cycle, improve win rates, grow revenue in key accounts, accelerate new hire ramp-up and improve overall quota attainment.

To learn more about how we can help you and how our approach differs from the other sales enablement solution providers, click on the image below for a free copy of our eBook, "[Sales Training That Sticks.](#)"



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