

The Building Blocks of a Successful Sales Coaching Program

6 Factors to Align Your Program for Success



INTRODUCTION

It's no surprise that high-performing sales teams have managers who spend more time coaching, as evidenced in our [Sales Management Research Report](#). There are numerous benefits to effective coaching, but despite the general acknowledgment that it's a high-value activity, many managers don't spend enough time coaching. Several reasons managers don't coach include that they don't know how, don't think they have time, or don't have a process to follow.

But here's another piece of the puzzle that many sales leaders don't want to admit. One of the biggest reasons managers don't coach is because the organization hasn't adopted a culture of coaching. Changing the organization culture is hard. At a minimum, if the initiative hasn't been made a top priority by the leadership team and there isn't a process in place to manage the behavior change, it will be doomed to fail. The six factors identified in the graphic below will help ensure your sales coaching program is aligned for success.



MOTIVATION

#1 EXECUTIVE SPONSORSHIP

The first and arguably most crucial factor is to have active executive sponsorship for the program. This may take a bit of internal selling, helping executives understand and appreciate the numerous benefits of coaching and the strong ROI it can produce.

The objectives of the coaching program should tie directly to a business priority (grow sales, increase margins, reduce turn-over, etc.) so that it becomes linked to the business strategy. Having a strong executive sponsor(s) who can kick-off the program, communicate the value and support the program throughout will be critical to success. Find this person.

#2 MANAGER MOTIVATION

People generally won't change their behavior without a compelling reason to do so. Helping Front Line Sales Managers understand the value that coaching can provide for themselves and their team is critical.

Creating supporting materials to show how coaching can increase the performance of their teams, develop their leadership skills and potentially result in a credential or certification is essential to "selling" the coaching program to the managers. This answers the "What's in it for me?" (WIIFM) question that will be necessary to get their buy-in and commitment to change.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

#3 COACHING TRAINING

Engaging, role-play-based skills training is important to ensure participants have a chance to practice the coaching skills in a safe, constructive environment.

The training can be Instructor-Led (ILT), Virtual Instructor Led (VILT) or [OnDemand](#), but it's not until they're put into real-life coaching scenarios (that simulate what they'll encounter with their Reps) that the training really "comes to life."

There should be an element of coaching role plays in any type of sales coaching training program. If they're not given a chance to practice the skills in the classroom, it means they'll be practicing these skills on your expensive, coveted sales resources, and this can be an expensive way to train if they get it wrong.

After the initial training, there needs to be a plan for reinforcement of the training, to include periodic check-ins and follow-up to review key concepts, answer questions, and troubleshoot problems. The schedule for these sessions should be communicated at the time of the initial training, so participants know what's expected of them after the sessions.

#4 FIELD SUPPORT

The most successful coaching programs are the ones where there is ongoing field support for the participants after the training. This may include master trainers/coaches conducting field observation and providing

feedback, or simply reviewing the coaching visit reports and providing feedback to the coaches. Some amount of oversight, support and ongoing coaching of the coaches is important to ensure the skills are being practiced and behaviors are changing in the field.

ACCOUNTABILITY

#5 CADENCE AND EXPECTATIONS

One of the components that's often missed in a Sales Coaching program is a clear cadence and expectations for when and how coaching will happen after the training.

Too often managers are left to figure it out or conduct coaching when they have time, which unfortunately is rarely successful. As part of the training, a coaching implementation guide should be produced that tells managers how often (at a minimum) they're expected to coach their teams, and what evidence will be collected (via a form, tool or online application) to show that the coaching occurred.

Guiding the manager on how much coaching they should be doing will allow them to prioritize this accordingly. Ideally, the leadership team should communicate the message on an ongoing basis that coaching is important, and they expect it to happen.

#6 TRACKING AND MEASUREMENT

The final piece of the puzzle to help ensure a successful coaching program implementation is to ensure that there is a mechanism for tracking and measuring that coaching is occurring.

There needs to be a way of creating visibility into how much coaching is happening and where managers may be missing the mark. This can be as simple as manually tracking the field visit reports or a much more sophisticated online program that creates a dashboard of coaching visits, key priorities, and follow-up actions. Whatever the case may be, there needs to be a way to ensure that quality coaching conversations are happening after the training.

Evidence of coaching is also necessary if the organization is going to implement a coaching certification program, which typically includes training, skill application, knowledge checks, and evidence of coaching execution in the field.

Creating a culture of sales coaching in an organization is difficult and can take months to years to successfully implement, but the benefits are significant. By following these key factors, it's possible to increase the chances of success and improve the return on investment.

The six factors to align your sales coaching program for success in this white paper are part of Sales Readiness Group's (SRG) Comprehensive Sales Management development program. To learn how your sales managers can improve the effectiveness of your sales team, please contact SRG at 1-800-490-0715.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



RAY MAKELA – MANAGING DIRECTOR

Ray Makela is an author, speaker, and business executive with 25 years of management, consulting, and sales experience. At Sales Readiness Group (SRG), Ray oversees all client engagements and the delivery of sales and sales management training programs. He has delivered programs for clients such as Alcon/Novartis, AIG, Sysco, Nielsen, Timken, Follett, Pandora, Ritchie Bros, HERE, Infor, Galderma and Walmart. Before SRG, Ray was a partner and owner at Codesic Consulting. He was responsible for business development, managing customer relationships, and the development of the sales team. Ray has also held management positions at Accenture and Claremont Technology Group as a consultant in the Organizational Development practice. Earlier in his career, Ray served for seven years as an officer in the US Navy. He earned his B.A in Speech Communications from the University of Washington and an M.P.A. in Public Administration and Information Systems Management from the University of Southern California.

About Sales Readiness Group

Sales Readiness Group (SRG) is an industry leading sales training company. Our mission is to help improve the performance of sales teams by providing customized, skills-based training programs that produce sustainable behavior change. Our solutions include comprehensive sales training, sales coaching, and sales management programs.

Sales Readiness Group, Inc.

Toll Free: 1-800-490-0715

info@salesreadinessgroup.com

www.SalesReadinessGroup.com