

RAIN SELLING: KEYS TO LEADING MASTERFUL SALES CONVERSATIONS

by Mike Schultz & John Doerr

Influence, persuade, and sell in any situation

RAIN Selling: Keys to Leading Masterful Sales Conversations

Discover the secret to engaging buyers in powerful conversations and influencing them to buy from you.

Report Summary

Conversations make or break everything in sales. Every conversation presents an opportunity to find new opportunities, win new customers, and increase sales.

Yet so many sellers struggle with creating initial conversations and moving them to the close. They make common mistakes that end up losing them deals.

We've identified six keys to sales conversation success, all encompassed in our RAIN Selling methodology.

The Most Successful Conversations Are Based on RAIN

R APPORT

Develop strong rapport with buyers. The entire selling process hinges upon the relationship and trust established between buyer and seller.

A SPIRATIONS / AFFLICTIONS

Dig deep and ask the right questions to uncover a buyer's complete set of afflictions and aspirations.

I MPACT

Provide a detailed explanation to the buyer of the impact of their action or inaction.

N EW REALITY

Paint a compelling picture of what a buyer's situation will look like after they decide to go forward with you.

A&I

Advocacy / Inquiry: Find a balance between talking and listening: asking the right questions and influencing without coercing allows the seller to steer the conversation in the right direction.

IN

Influence: Subtly bring buyers down a path of your choosing and help them decide in your favor.

Keys to Leading Masterful Sales Conversations

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It's 4 p.m. on a Thursday and you're about to meet the CEO of a major company you'd like to win as a client. The conversation starts as you walk into the office, approach the CEO, stretch out your hand, and say, "Nice to meet you, Jill. I'm Steve Webb."

Fast forward to a meeting about 7 months later: 3 p.m. on a Wednesday this time. You head into the office. Jill gets out from behind her desk and says, "Good to see you again, Steve. Here's a check for \$1.2 million. Let's get started."

Suffice it to say, a lot has to happen between "nice to meet you" and "here's a check, let's get started." Yet two things are true. 1) This is how it happens. And, 2) conversations form the bridge between "hello" and "let's go."

How to lead sales conversations, influence your prospects to want to buy, buy from you, buy

a complete solution, and pay full price for it confounds many people. But it doesn't have to. There are key principles that you can follow to lead masterful sales conversations and join the sales elite.

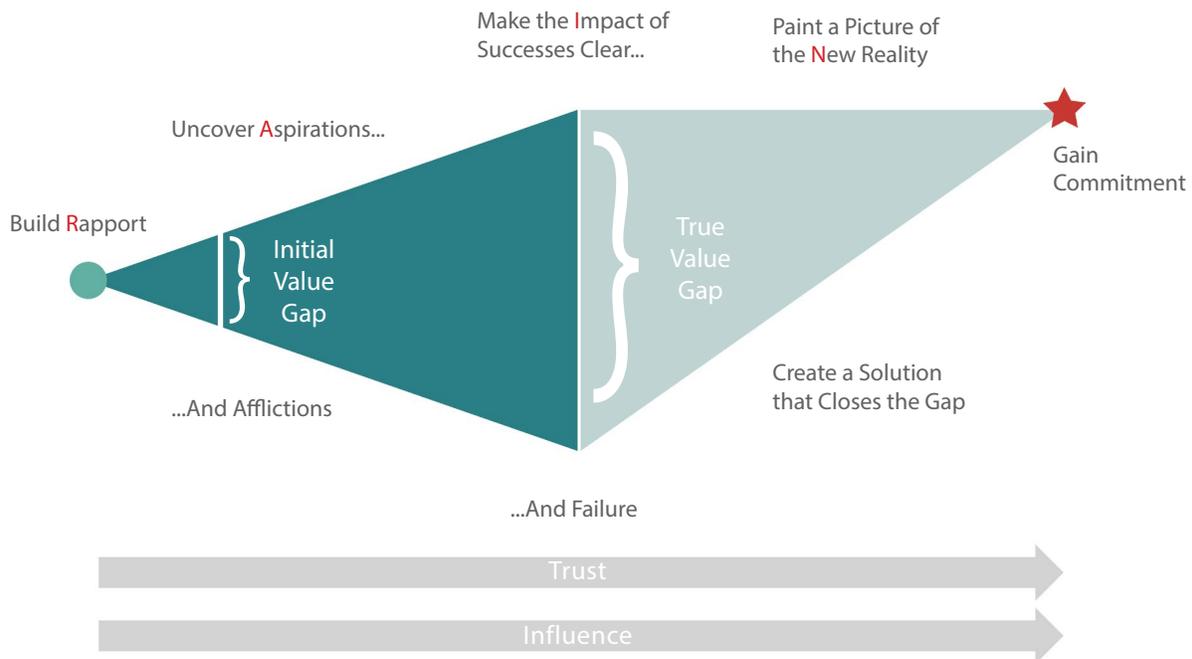
In this report, we'll introduce you to six of these key principles and the RAIN SellingSM methodology, so you can start leading masterful rainmaking conversations and winning more new business today.

RAIN Conversation Model

RAIN Selling is an acronym for Rapport, Aspirations and Afflictions, Impact, and New Reality. These are the core concepts you need to remember to lead a rainmaking conversation. In addition, the "A" and the "I" perform double duty, standing for Advocacy and Inquiry, and the "IN" will help you remember to maximize your Influence (Fig. 1).

The RAIN acronym is a nod to the fact that this process is focused on rainmakers—a common name for people who bring the most new clients and revenue into an organization.

Figure 1. RAIN Conversation Model





R BUILD REAL RAPPORT WITH BUYERS

Bringing Rapport to Rainmaking Conversations

The concept of rapport building is not new. You can find book after book written from the 1920's onward that will teach you "techniques" for rapport building with prospects.

While the subtle art of rapport may be intuitive to some, many buyers and sellers wrongly equate the concept of rapport building with contrived chit chat.

You shouldn't make superficial connections; you should make genuine connections. Genuine rapport sets the foundation for trust and strong relationships.

All things being equal, people buy from people they like. Strong rapport can tip the scales in your favor to win new business.

5 Simple Ways to Build Real Rapport with Prospects

- 1. Be genuine:** Before the first day of school, jobs, camp, and any family get together, my dad would always say, "Just be yourself and everything will be fine." Same goes for generating rapport with buyers and customers. Don't try to be anything you are not. Don't create a new persona, and don't sound contrived. Just be yourself and relax. Good things will follow.
- 2. Show interest:** It's no surprise that people are self-focused. This is quite helpful to those of us in sales because we need to learn about our buyers before we can provide the best solutions. Show interest in prospects as people and in their business challenges, and you'll improve your chance to success.

- 3. Allow time for small talk:** If you jump right in with "OK, let's get down to business" before you give everyone a chance to take a breath and say hello, it often creates a tense atmosphere. You have to gauge when to start talking business at the right time: too early, and a chilly abruptness fills the air...take too much time chatting, and the buyer can wonder, "Are we ever going to get going here?" Time the conversation right, and you'll be well on your way.

- 4. Balance advocacy and inquiry:** One of the best ways to establish a connection with a buyer is to balance asking questions (inquiry) with talking or giving advice (advocacy). Talk too much and the buyer will tune out. Ask too many questions and they'll feel like they're getting the third degree. The rapport-building sweet spot is usually somewhere in the middle, leaning a bit towards giving the prospect more airtime than you.

- 5. Listen actively:** While the heading for this is "listen actively" it could just as easily read, "listen, actually." Many sellers are too caught up in what they're saying or too focused on what they are going to say next. They're not only not actively listening, they're not actually listening. If your buyers perceive that you are not listening to them, building rapport will be virtually impossible.

When you build genuine rapport with buyers, you may find that the process moves more quickly, that you're able to uncover a deeper set of needs, and that more buyers end up choosing you.

"The farmer, it appears, must not be approached too abruptly... You should first talk about the horses, soil, and market conditions. This conversation will show that you are interested in things close to him and likewise give you a chance to study his temperament and to learn his likes and dislikes, and discover his weaknesses."

- Clarence Darrow in *The American Mercury* in 1925 writing about the topic of "Salesmanship"



A UNCOVER ASPIRATIONS & AFFLICTIONS

How to Uncover the Full Set of Client Needs

Most sales advice suggests that to sell products and services as solutions to needs, you must first uncover the problems and pains of your buyers (their afflictions). Uncovering your buyer's afflictions is a crucial step in the business development process.

The reasons are simple:

- + **If the buyer communicates his business afflictions to you, then it is likely that wants them to go away** if possible; he is considering if it makes sense to invest the time, money, and brainpower to eliminate them.
- + **Each affliction you uncover** gives you the chance to explore it fully to discover its true business impact.
- + **Uncovering and discussing one affliction can lead to other afflictions**, which the buyer may not have been thinking about in the first place.

But focusing only on afflictions can do you a disservice because problems and pain are only half the story...

The Second Half of the Story: Aspirations

Afflictions only focus on half—the negative half—of the buyer's needs. If you focus only on the negative, you miss half your chance to uncover opportunities.

When buyers buy, they are typically thinking as much about aspirations (the future they are seeking) as they are about afflictions (problems they'd like to fix).

If you think about asking questions exclusively in the negative, you'll tend to probe for needs that way. You'll ask questions to the effect of: Where are you unhappy with performance? What keeps you up at night? Where is the pain?

Think of aspirations as much as afflictions, and you'll remember to ask **future-seeking** as well as problem-solving questions—questions with themes like: Where do you want to go? What are the possibilities?

If you ask questions that look to the future, you will find that—instead of just bringing some Advil for the pain—you will be able to paint the most compelling, impactful, and comprehensive vision of a new and better reality for your clients.



CAPTURING MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Assume for a moment that you're a partner at a diversified accounting, financial, and business advisory firm. You have a meeting scheduled with the owner of a medium-size business because he is not happy with the tax accounting services he is receiving from his current CPA firm.

Through a series of questions, you have uncovered several problems this business owner has with his current accounting firm, including missed deadlines, impersonal service, and a suspicion that the firm isn't up-to-date on the latest tax regulations. You know you can help. You continue the conversation, proposing next steps on how to move forward. You feel confident in how you managed the conversation and feel that a new client will be in your future.

As you are saying good-bye he says, "I'm meeting my lawyer for lunch. You two don't know each other. Want to join us?" Not wanting to pass up an opportunity to further the relationship (and because he eats at expensive French restaurants), you are happy to oblige.

You get to lunch, exchange pleasantries all around, and sit down to eat. A few minutes into the conversation the lawyer asks your potential client, "So, what's going on at your company lately?" "What do you want to get done in the next year or so?" and "What do you think you need to do to get these things done?"

You are amazed by some of your potential client's answers. You find he has opened up, going on for good chunks of time about the major initiatives at his company, including some initiatives he has not yet launched.

As you listen, you realize there are at least three areas within these strategic initiatives for which your expertise is a perfect fit and where your firm can help him greatly. And the size of the fees in these areas is three times as large as what you just talked about in your meeting with the buyer only an hour before.

What Just Happened?

In the example above, you can see how the lawyer asked future-seeking questions (aspirations), not problem-solving ones (afflictions).

By doing so, he's able to open an entire new range of opportunities.

So the next time you are preparing to find the areas of the buyer's pain and problems that you can fix, try focusing on his aspirations as well as his afflictions.

You'll find the conversations to be richer, your relationships deeper, and your sales success greater.



I MAKE THE IMPACT CLEAR

People buy with their hearts and justify with their heads. Make sure you win in both areas.

“So What?”

After uncovering a buyer’s aspirations and afflictions, the question becomes, “So what?”

If your afflictions don’t get solved, so what? What won’t happen? Will they get worse? How will they affect the bottom line of your company, division, or department? How will they affect your life?

If your aspirations don’t become reality, so what? Will your competition get ahead of you if you don’t innovate? Will you lose market share if you aren’t aggressive in your strategy? Will you never be able to grow your business to a point where you can sell it and reach your personal financial goals? Will the promotion you so desire continue to elude you?

When you understand the impact caused by your prospect’s afflictions, you establish the true business obstacles that they present.

Your ability to quantify the impact and paint the “so what” picture is the foundation for how important it is for the decision maker to buy from you. If you don’t answer the “so what” question, the initiative will fall to the bottom of the priority list.

Make the impact clear, and the buyer’s perception of the gap between where they are and where they want to be grows to its widest.

6 Ways to Communicate the Impact

- 1. Calculate the business impact:** Each Affliction that you solve, and each Aspiration that you help a buyer realize, should have a financial impact. Simply put, make the business case for the financial effects of engaging your products and services whenever possible.
- 2. Communicate emotional impact:** Increased prestige. A more enjoyable day. Faster promotions. Ability to relax on the weekend. Peace of mind. There are many non-financial influences on the sale that can tip the scales in your favor.
- 3. Impact compared to the alternative:** Not only do you need to know the impact of working with you, you need to know the impact on the buyer of working with alternatives to you. Perhaps your company offers better ROI, their products are inferior, or your service is better. Know the alternatives, and you can make the best case for helping the buyer to succeed with you.
- 4. Establish what won’t happen:** Sometimes the buyer sees the positive impact of engaging your services, but doesn’t see any negative impact to not moving forward. The result is usually a very slow decision-making process. If this is the case, you can ask the buyer “what won’t happen” if they don’t move forward. By doing this, you probe for consequences of inaction, and move yourself up the buyer’s to-do list.
- 5. Build credibility with similar impact:** They have aspirations and afflictions. You’re selling what they need to help them meet their goals. The value proposition is clear, but they are still unsure. Sometimes buyers want to know if you’ve been there before. And, when you were there, what happened.
- 6. Demonstrate impact tangibly:** The more you can make the impact tangible, the stronger the case for the impact will be. In essence, you need to paint a picture for them so they can see, as tangibly as you can depict it, what is going to change for them if they engage your products and services.



N PAINT A PICTURE OF THE NEW REALITY

3 Steps to Crafting a Compelling New Reality

Whatever your product or service may be, before they buy, your prospect must see how it will change their world for the better.

You have to help buyers understand exactly what outcomes they get as a result of working with you.

In other words, show them how you will create a new reality for them. Follow these 3 steps to create this new reality:

1. Establish the new reality benchmark:

In the end of a well-managed sales process, your job is to create a new reality that will be the best for your customer,

given their specific aspirations and afflictions and the impact of doing (or not doing) something about them.

This process can start even before you have begun your needs discovery and solution crafting process. Ask them what they want the world to look like, and you never know what you're going to find out.

Questions that start with the buyer envisioning the future are a good way to get the creative juices flowing.

2. Quantify the impact: For example, share with them how they will:

- + Save 22%, or \$1.2 million on costs of XYZ Widgets
- + Improve their cycle times by 13 days, cutting out major inefficiencies in their operational process
- + Improve quality levels by 17% by setting up operations in a new city

Quantify the new reality and the buyer will listen.

Whatever the new reality is, you need to communicate it to the buyer.

- #### 3. Paint the picture:
- It is now time to put the new reality into your proposal to the buyer. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a chart, a graph, or a table is worth at least that many words and probably more. The goal is to paint a compelling picture.

You do not have to rely on just one picture. As much as is appropriate, you can present the new reality in both qualitative (descriptive or conceptual) terms as well as quantitative (financial or other numerical-based measure).

Purchasing complex products and services can be as difficult as selling them. It is tough to get a handle on what to buy because it is difficult to differentiate between competing providers and their solutions. For the buyer, understanding and communicating to their colleagues the value of moving forward is where the difficulties often surface.

When you follow RAIN Selling and paint the picture of a compelling new reality, your buyers will know the solution is you.



A&I

BALANCE ADVOCACY AND INQUIRY

Isn't it important for my buyers to know what I know so they can understand what I can do for them?

Do You Talk Too Much?

The A and the I in RAIN play double duty to remind you to balance advocacy (giving advice...talking) and inquiry (asking questions...finding out more...letting the prospect have the airtime) in your sales conversations.

When sellers talk too much, they generate too few customers.

Why do those of us trying to develop business constantly find ourselves in a similar position? Perhaps because we don't always understand why we talk too much.

Then there are those sellers on the other side of the spectrum who, somewhere along the line, learn that good salespeople ask great questions. They then take the advice too strongly and ask question after question, offering no advice and making the person on the other side of the table feel like they're in an interrogation.

Instead of talking too much, they ask too many questions.

What's the key to talking the right amount? You need to balance advocacy and inquiry.

What You're Not Hearing When You're the One Doing All the Talking

While it's important to showcase your expert knowledge, here are three opportunities you miss when you talk too much:

- 1. Building rapport:** Buyers don't just buy your solutions; they buy a trusted advisor relationship. If you are doing all the talking, you will not pick up on the signals that indicate what in a relationship, besides your expertise, is important to

your buyer. You miss your chance to build rapport.

- 2. Uncovering the needs of your buyer:**

When entering into sales conversations, you often have a strong idea of what you can do for the buyer, but understandably only a vague notion of what the buyer truly needs. If you are doing all the talking, you can only guess which components of your solution set will offer the greatest value for the buyer.

- 3. Demonstrating what it is like to work with you:**

What better way to engage buyers than to have them experience what it is truly like to work with you. When you listen, show interest in the buyers' issues, and ask insightful questions, you provide the buyer with a glimpse into the real you, and what it will be like to work with your company.

People like to talk about themselves. To tell their stories.

If you do not give the buyer a chance to tell their story, they feel ignored, overwhelmed, and unheard.

This is not a very good way to start the relationship.

Your ability to balance advocacy and inquiry is key to leading successful sales conversations.



APPLY INFLUENCE PRINCIPLES IN YOUR SALES CONVERSATIONS

Influence, but Don't Coerce

The IN in RAIN serves as a reminder to apply influence in all of your sales conversations.

Influence in sales is not about tricking someone into buying something they don't need. Quite the contrary, the act of selling, when done well, adds a significant amount of value. A well-planned sales conversation helps buyers make smarter decisions.

You want to take control of the buying process and bring buyers down a path of your choosing to help them make a decision in your favor.

Don't, however, confuse control with coercion. In sales your control should be sure but subtle. Lead the conversation down the right path by following RAIN and asking questions, setting agendas, sharing ideas, summarizing and communicating the impact of working with you, involving the buyer in creating solutions, and recommending action.

If you try to control with an iron fist, you will create more resistance than partnership.

Coercion won't get you far, but following the 16 principles of influence will serve you well.

16 Principles of Influence

- 1. Attention:** You must capture the attention of today's busy buyers and draw their focus away from other things towards you. If you can't capture attention, you'll never get a seat at the table.
- 2. Curiosity:** After you get attention, keep it by fueling the buyer's desire to learn more.
- 3. Desire:** Desire creates dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction is the impetus for action in sales.
- 4. Envy:** Desire is powerful. Envy is desire on turbo boost—it's the desire for what other people have.
- 5. Emotional Journey:** People forget what they hear and remember how they feel. Elicit and develop lasting images and feelings—take buyers on an emotional journey in your conversation.
- 6. Belief:** Inspire confidence in the efficacy of your people, process, company, and product or service. When you increase belief, you reduce risk and inspire action.
- 7. Justification:** People buy with their hearts and justify with their heads. You need to ensure the rational argument that supports why they should buy from you comes out.
- 8. Trust:** Belief is faith that something will work. Trust is faith in you. Trust is the foundation of sales. No trust, no sale.
- 9. Stepping Stones:** People are driven to be consistent. Ask them to do something once and they're more likely to continue to do it and be open to expanding sizes and scopes in the future.
- 10. Ownership:** Until the buyer takes ownership over decisions, actions, and results, your ability to influence them is limited. You need them to take responsibility for making change happen.



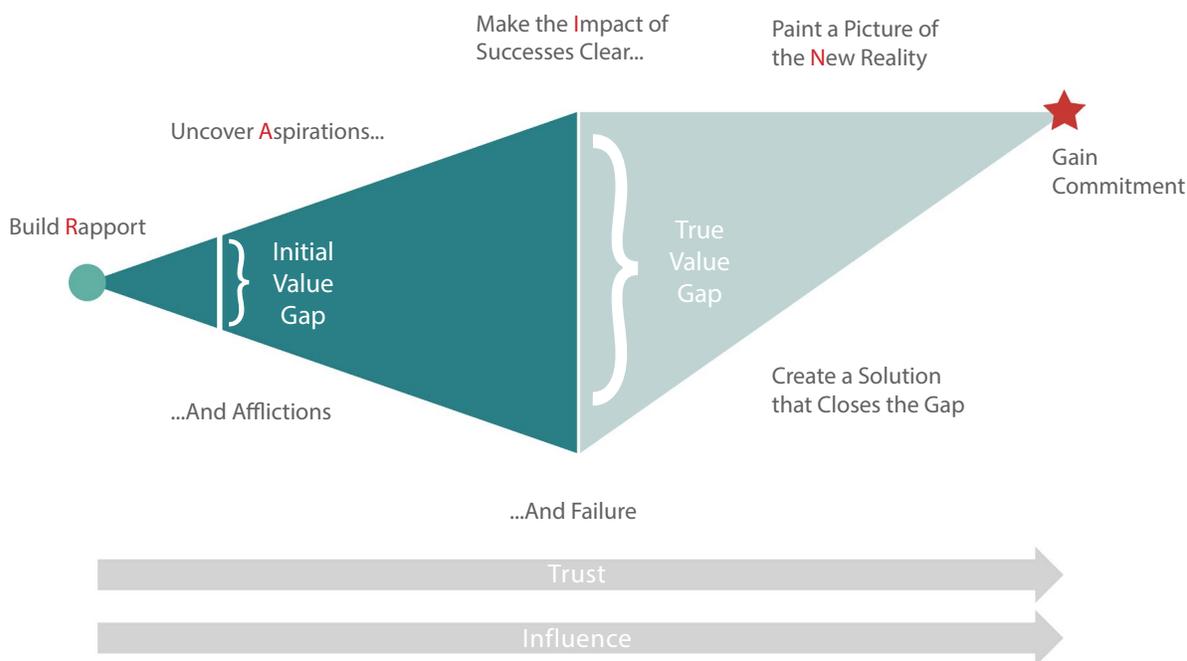
- 11. Involvement:** When you have a hand in creating something, you're more likely to passionately advocate for its success. Get buyers to become partners in the selling process.
- 12. Desire for inclusion:** Inclusion supports people's needs for validation. If you can show that others are doing it, it will increase envy and curiosity as to what they might be missing.
- 13. Scarcity:** People value things that are rare and hard to get.
- 14. Likability:** People pay attention to, talk to, and buy from people they like. They want to see people they like succeed.

- 15. Indifference:** You want to be likable, but you don't want to need to be liked. Be ready and willing to walk away, and happy to do it if the situation warrants.
- 16. Commitment:** When people make written and public commitments, they're more likely to keep them. Make sure you gain commitment for every next step in the process, get it in writing, and make it public.

As you consider the 16 principles of influence, remember that you must influence the right people. If a buyer doesn't have the power to influence a buying decision, there's no reason for you to influence that person.

CONCLUSION

The power of the RAIN model is like anything; the more you practice the better you become. If you remember what RAIN stands for, you can apply it in your next sales conversation and see a difference right away.



But if you're really looking to supercharge your results, the RAIN acronym is only the beginning.

To help you and your team fully master sales conversations and unleash your sales potential, we offer the RAIN Selling training seminar. Based on decades of experience and research, our flagship sales seminar introduces the strategies and tactics that are the foundation of successful selling, and provides the key selling skills needed to become a top-performer. Learn more on the next page.



Program Overview

RAIN Selling is RAIN Group's core sales training program that teaches the RAIN Selling method. Popularized in our bestselling book *Rainmaking Conversations*, the RAIN Selling method has been rated a "5 out of 5" by ES Research and is one of the few methods in this elite category.

Focusing on how to lead masterful sales conversations, this program introduces the strategies and tactics that are the foundation of successful selling, and provides your team with the skills needed to become top-performing sellers. RAIN Selling concepts, tools, and strategies have been tested and proven to work.

Learning Objectives

In the RAIN Selling program, your team will learn how to:

- + Lead masterful sales conversations from beginning to end
- + Use questioning techniques to uncover the full set of customer needs and desires
- + Sell ideas, insights, and perspectives that influence the buyer's agenda and inspire buyer action
- + Understand buyers, buyer types, and the buying process
- + Close new business with success and high integrity
- + Overcome objections that get in the way of the sale
- + Sell on value and reduce price push backs
- + Avoid common mistakes that even the most experienced sellers make

Top 10 Benefits of RAIN Selling

1. Learn what sales winners do, and sell like a top performer
2. Follow a proven method and conversation process for winning sales
3. Ask incisive questions that get to the heart of customer needs
4. Differentiate from the competition based on seller skill and added value
5. Understand and position your value most powerfully
6. Capture the imagination of your buyers by helping them see their New Reality
7. Demonstrate the impact and return on investment of your offerings
8. Understand buyers and buying, including how to sell to 8 different buyer personas
9. Increase win ratios
10. Maximize cross-sales and up-sales

Delivery Options

- + Tailored on-site, instructor-led programs
- + Train-the-Trainer, Licensing
- + Blended learning: Online and on-site, instructor-led curriculum
- + Online learning program

Winners Sell Radically Different than Second-Place Finishers

In our groundbreaking *What Sales Winners Do Differently* research, we looked at what separates sales winners from second-place finishers. According to buyers, these are the **top 5 factors most separating sales winners from the rest:**



RAIN Selling Online Training Program

Are you an individual looking to become a better seller or is your team spread across a broad geography? In RAIN Selling Online, you will learn a proven method to improve your results at every stage of the sales process—from prospecting to closing the deal. Learn more at <http://www.raingroup.com/rso>.

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Unleash the Sales Potential of Your Team with RAIN Group

RAIN Group is a sales training, assessment, and performance improvement company that helps leading organizations improve sales results. We've helped hundreds of thousands of salespeople, managers, and professionals in more than 34 countries increase their sales significantly with our RAIN SellingSM methodology.

We can help you:

Implement Sales Training That Delivers Real Results

RAIN Group's sales training system inspires real change and delivers real results that last. Our rigorous approach includes sales team evaluation, customized training programs, robust reinforcement, and coaching to help you and your team develop sales and negotiation skills, and maximize your results.

Grow Your Key Accounts

At most companies, there's a huge, untapped opportunity to add more value—and thus sell more—to existing accounts. We help our clients capitalize on these revenue growth opportunities. Whether it's simply increasing cross-selling and up-selling or implementing a major strategic account management program, we can help.

Identify Who Can and Will Sell with Great Success

Our assessments measure sales attributes and skills, identifying the factors that really make a difference in sales performance. Whether you're looking to hire someone who can and will sell, or looking to improve sales performance, we'll help you build the most successful sales team.

Implement World-class Coaching

We coach sellers, professionals, and leaders individually and in groups to achieve the greatest and fastest increase in sales results. And we train and certify leaders and managers in our RAIN Sales Coaching system. Often, it's RAIN Sales Coaching that truly unlocks the team's potential, and keeps them motivated to produce the best results consistently.

Find out more about how RAIN Group can help you unleash the sales potential of your team by visiting RAINGroup.com or calling (508) 405-0438.

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