



THE
SALES TRAINING
BUYER'S INTERVIEW
GUIDE



A WHITEPAPER BY THE BROOKS GROUP

Event-only based sales training is dead. Or at least it should be.

Any credible sales training provider should be able to speak extensively with you about how they will reinforce, over time, what your attendees learn in the classroom to ensure that the new sales process becomes a permanent part of your sales culture.

Choosing a third-party sales training provider is one of the most important steps you can take in the pursuit of top-line revenue growth. It's vital because sales revenue drives the success of your entire organization. The right sales training initiative, from initial discovery work to design to delivery to reinforcement, will have a measurable, long-term impact on your entire sales team.

The challenge is identifying the right training provider for your organization.

Evaluating sales training programs can also be daunting if you haven't done it before. After all, sales training is not something you can see or touch. You're buying a professional service, an experience, information and an outcome.

Just some of the benefits of a successful sales training initiative include:

- **Improved new account acquisition**
- **Less price resistance**
- **Improved sales management coaching skills**
- **Complete sales force alignment**
- **Improved funnel health and predictability**



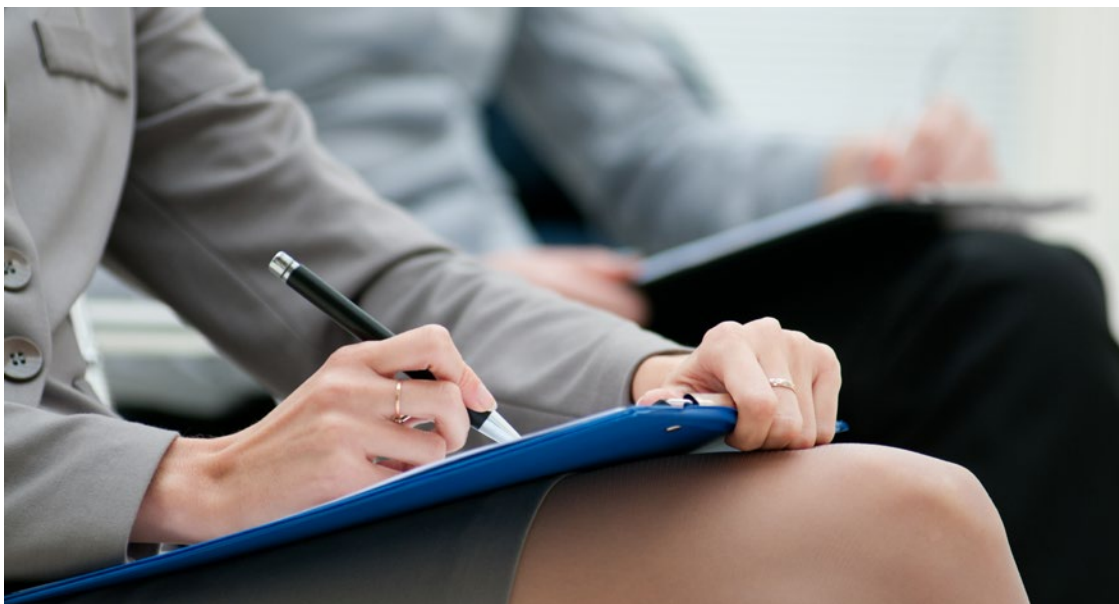
Choosing a sales training company doesn't have to be complicated and implementing a really successful program can actually be quite logical.

The goal of this easy-to-follow buyer's guide is to explore the information you'll want to consider when interviewing sales training companies.

Giving your sales team stronger selling skills to help them generate more revenue is the over-arching goal of any sales training initiative. In our 40+ years of experience in training sales organizations, we have seen how the over-complication of a sales training initiative virtually guarantees salespeople don't use the process in their daily selling activities.

And isn't consistent use of the sales process the ultimate goal?

To help you choose the right sales training company, we've developed this list of 7 simple questions to ask any organization or consultant you're considering hiring.



1 “How will you learn our business and assess our strengths and opportunities for improvement?”

A pre-program evaluation process is absolutely critical to a successful sales training initiative. Evaluating the overall state of your sales organization is a critical component of any sales training initiative. And yet, in the rush to execute a live training program, sales leadership may overlook or rush the critical fact-finding phase of the sales training initiative.

Identify a company willing to send consultants on calls with team members to learn what actually happens in the field – with both prospects and customers – on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Determine whether your team is even “trainable” in the first place. Evaluate whether your sales team structure makes sense.

All of this information – and more – is critical to understand before even discussing the classroom training.

Additionally, try to identify a sales training company that offers some sort of personal assessment tool as a component of the initiative. Top-tier training companies use assessments as powerful resources in the evaluation stage of the initiative as well as during the actual delivery of the program content

2 “How can I make sure that your sales process makes sense for our environment?”

It may be tempting to provide your team with sales training as complex as your marketplace. However, introducing over-complicated sales processes and tools will only serve to impede your team’s sales efforts.

If your team can’t remember the process, let alone immediately use it, chances are that it’s not going to get traction.

The sales process must be straightforward, memorable, repeatable and durable if you expect it to be used. Select a proven baseline sales process and then customize that process to match the realities of your selling environment.



3 “How are you going to help me make sure our sales team pays attention to this initiative and that it isn’t dismissed as just another corporate mandate?”

Any top-tier sales training company should have sound change management principles at the core of their offerings.

It’s imperative that the sales process isn’t perceived as just another compulsory corporate policy, but instead is something that will give each member of your team a greater chance of success in his or her selling efforts.

Top-down executive sponsorship of such messaging is key to letting your team know that the sales training initiative is a priority and should receive their attention.

Best-practice sales training providers will aid sales leadership – and even company leadership as a whole – with the appropriate strategies and tools to present a training initiative in a way that creates salesperson buy-in from the outset.

In the world of sales training there is true content customization and then there is tailoring. It’s important to be able to differentiate between the two.



4 “How do you go about customizing content for our company?”

Tailoring is the practice of changing a few words in the sales training curriculum, putting your logo on the program workbooks and calling it a customized sales training program.

True customization involves incorporating information learned about your company in a robust pre-program evaluation process into the program materials. True customization incorporates:

- **Industry language**
- **Observations from the field**
- **Real-life case studies**
- **Classroom exercises**
- **Involvement from field managers**
- **Input from corporate leaders**
- **Personal assessment results**
- **Corporate cultural realities**
- **Desired learning outcomes**

Integrating these concepts into the program materials makes the classroom experience absolutely seamless to your team’s real-world selling environment.

5 “What’s the best training methodology for our sales team?”

The value of live, face-to-face classroom training is absolutely undeniable.

The best practice is to “install” your sales process by bringing your sales team together, out of the field, to actively engage with sales training subject matter experts. In our experience, this method is guaranteed to give you the best return on your training dollars.

While not ideal, there are other viable alternatives to live training. Should you decide that some sort of online or distance learning option is the best for your sales team, be sure to have the organization you’re dealing with discuss the difference between learner-led virtual training and virtual leader-led training.



Learner-led virtual sales training:

Involves giving your salespeople access to an online learning portal and having them complete the training at their own pace.

With this type of training, it's key that the content is highly engaging and motivating, otherwise you risk the chance of salespeople not completing it. Be sure your training provider offers online sales training that follows best practices in the eLearning industry.

Leader-led virtual sales training:

A more robust substitute for classroom training, this type of virtual training involves passive learning and application by participants, but should also incorporate regular group access to the trainer/coach via the Internet or teleconference.

During these sessions, sales training participants should be coached on their in-the-field application of the skills and strategies covered in e-learning. Instructors should also provide real-time coaching to help ensure they have the support they need to keep the sales training momentum going.

6 “How do you make sure that the new sales and sales management processes become a permanent part of our sales culture?”

Reinforcement is of equal – if not greater – value than the classroom learning experience itself, because it's here that attendees will begin to own the sales process and apply it to see increased sales results.

Top reinforcement platforms should incorporate:

- **Elements of real-world application**
- **Group competition**
- **Incentives**
- **Accountability**
- **Gamification**
- **Web-based content**
- **Access to live coaches**
- **Measurement and “drip” learning**

Integrating these elements ensures that your sales team is engaged in the process, the training initiative is sustainable, and that the concepts that you want used by your sales team become ingrained across the sales organization.





7 “How do I make sure our sales managers can coach their teams to the new sales process?”

Sales management training can make or break your sales process training initiative. A sales management training initiative can't just involve teaching managers the sales process, although it's critical for managers to have a mastery of the methodology themselves.

Instead, great sales management training is about becoming a better coach, learning to have difficult conversations, forecasting with accuracy, effectively conducting joint calls, spotting performance challenges, identifying top performers and where managers should spend most of their time, just to name a few topics.

Another best practice is to involve your organization's most respected sales managers in the curriculum customization process. You'll get practical advice on making the content realistic to your environment and applicable to the existing skill levels of your salespeople.

When respected managers are involved in program development, the credibility of the initiative and the buy-in of your sales group will become much greater.



Conclusion

In summary, the bottom-line questions you want to ask yourself when hiring a sales training provider are:

- **How will you learn our business and assess our strengths and opportunities for improvement?**
- **How can I make sure that your sales process makes sense for our environment?**
- **How are you going to help me make sure our sales team pays attention to this initiative and that it isn't dismissed as just another corporate mandate?**
- **How do you go about customizing content for our company?**
- **What's the best training methodology for our sales team?**
- **How do you make sure that the new sales and sales management processes become a permanent part of our sales culture?**
- **How do I make sure our sales managers can coach their teams to the new sales process?**

If you're investing resources in a sales training initiative, give the project the best chance of success by selecting an outsourced provider that's the right fit for your organization.

The Brooks Group understands that your sales organization is unique, and your sales enablement strategy should be as well. We partner with you to understand where you are today – and where you want to be in the future – to develop a path to sustained high sales performance.

Discover how the Maximum IMPACT Sales Enablement approach can help your organization achieve your short and long-term sales effectiveness goals with a plan that grows as you do.



Maximum IMPACT Sales Enablement

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About The Brooks Group

Founded in 1977, The Brooks Group is an award-winning B2B sales training company focused on bringing practical, straightforward solutions to your sales force selection and training challenges.

The Brooks Group provides a suite of proven sales and sales management development programs, industry-leading reinforcement tools, and best-in-class assessments.

For more information

The Brooks Group can be reached by phone at (800) 633-7762, by email at Contact@TheBrooksGroup.com or online at TheBrooksGroup.com.



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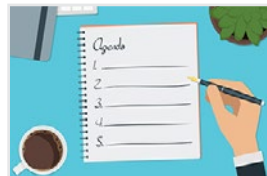
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