10 Sales Training Ideas

That Increase Team Readiness

BRAINSHARK
a Bigtincan™ company

Introduction

The sales profession isn't what it used to be. Today's sellers are dealing with the high expectations of savvy B2B buyers, decision-by-committee, disruptive technology, M&A, product innovations... and more.

Reps need to know A LOT to be at their best in front of buyers, but has your sales training strategy kept up with the times?

Many organizations' sales training has grown stale by relying on old-school tactics, like on-site boot camps and long-winded presentations, causing information overload for new reps. It's no surprise that 20% of salespeople say their training needs a complete overhaul.

If you're an internal training or enablement leader, we've got you covered! Below, we'll take a closer look at **10 sales training ideas and activities** to revamp your strategy – and ensure your reps stay prepared.

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1. Make Assessments Part of Your Sales Training

Sales organizations often cross their fingers and hope sellers who complete their training courses are ready for the field. In doing so, they risk unprepared reps flopping in front of buyers, costing the company deals, hurting brand reputation, and reducing seller confidence – ultimately wasting time for all parties.

Sales enablement leaders should focus not just on learning **consumption** (*"Did my reps finish their courses?"*), but also **assessment** (*"Can they perform key sales activities?"*) to encourage better training engagement, knowledge retention, and sales readiness.

You can implement training assessments in a few different ways:

- **Knowledge-checks:** quizzes and tests, ensure that reps have mastered key concepts
- **Simulation:** range from role plays to practicing elevator pitches with a video coaching tool, tells you whether reps are ready
- **Observation:** show reps can apply learning in the field

2. Examine Win/Loss Reports

To encourage knowledge sharing in your organization, you can report key wins and losses and make these reports available to reps as just-in-time learning assets. Incorporate them into training curriculums so that you can tie takeaways directly to positive (or negative) sales outcomes.

For example, if a high-performing rep just closed a highly competitive deal, assign a team member (sales enablement or product marketing) to interview the new customer.

Some questions to ask include:

- What challenges were they facing?
- What steps were taken to secure their commitment?
- Which value points most resonated with them?
- Why was your solution chosen over alternatives?

Based on what comes out of the report, you can identify areas where best practices made a difference and ensure you train your team on them.

Deal losses can be just as valuable in preparing sales reps for challenging situations. Maybe pricing objections threw a wrench in an otherwise smooth sales process, in which case you can review best practices. Maybe there were missed opportunities to position your product against a competitor's, allowing you to incorporate the loss report into competitive intelligence training.

Whatever the case, ensuring that sales reps have reviewed your key wins and losses allows them to apply actionable tips to future sales cycles.

Read more: How to Use Data to Measure Sales Enablement Success

3. Leverage Peer Learning

According to ATD, 91% of sales reps believe peer learning will help them succeed, and with good reason. Peer learning done well allows training leaders to harness the expertise of veteran salespeople – before they leave the organization – and transform it into training material for sellers of all ages and experience levels. Your 'B' and 'C' players can benefit by learning from the practices of your 'A' salespeople and seeing what "good" looks like in action.

Using these best practices allows you to create valuable sales training content. Using video coaching technology will enable reps to record videos detailing best practices, tips, and tricks, or win stories. For instance, you could ask the sales force, **"What is one technique you use to move a stalled deal forward?"** The best video responses to the question can be converted into formal learning content and made available for future reference.

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-ATD

4. Put Sales Reps in Their Buyer's Shoes

Training programs tend to focus heavily on product details and messaging, often at the expense of explaining the needs and challenges of the buyers. Perhaps that's why 77% of buyers believe salespeople don't understand their business, according to Accenture.

Make the buyer's journey a more prominent part of your sales training – both for new hire onboarding and learning reinforcement for the existing sales force. You can do this by ensuring buyer persona details, including critical business challenges, success metrics, and pain points, are part of your training curriculum (and then assessing your reps' mastery of them).

You'll also want to outline practical approaches for engaging buyers at each distinct step of the buyer's journey.

- Is the prospect committed to considering alternatives to the status quo?
- Share persuasion techniques that help buyers move into a decision cycle.
- Is the prospect settled on your solution and trying to justify the purchase to other decision-makers?

Outline approaches for accelerating time to a buying decision.

In addition, you can pair sales training with coaching exercises to force reps to think like buyers on their feet.

For example, if you sell security software, ask reps:

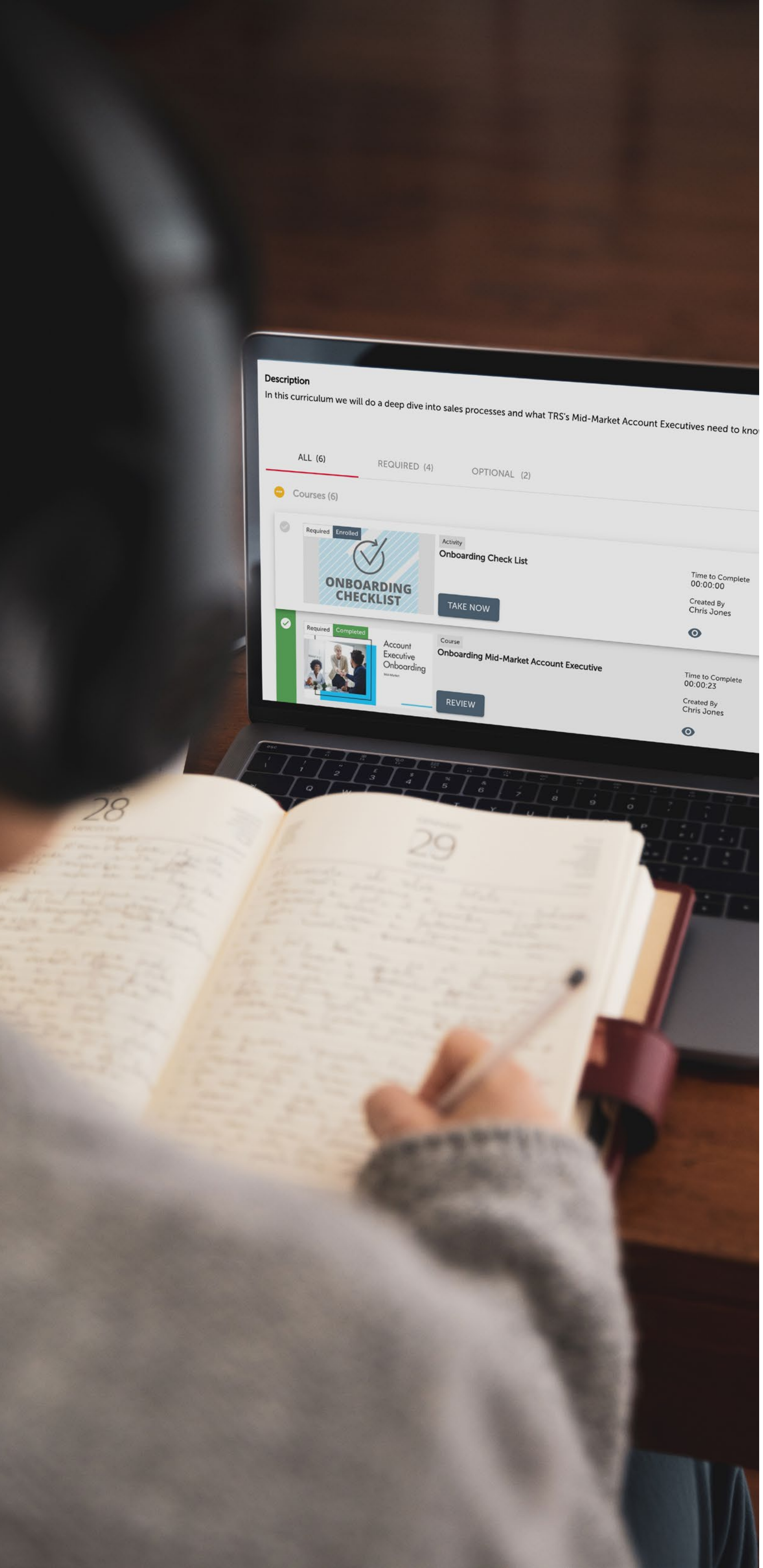
- What points the director of IT security might use to get the CIO on board with a new solution and how they would best present them?
- What issues matter most not only to the security lead but also to the CIO?

5. Highlight Industry Trends and News

Your salespeople may not be reading 30-page research reports on the state of B2B selling or your target markets. But a 600-word blog post covering timely social selling tips is a perfect addition to your training strategy.

However, you deliver continuous education to the sales force; incorporating outside perspectives into your training is crucial because it reminds your salespeople that the profession is still changing all the time and encourages them to stay up-to-date.

For instance, using a data-driven sales readiness platform like Brainshark, you can embed relevant research and news articles about target industries into training courses as required courses or attachments to ensure reps review them to complete their training. You can then add a knowledge check to quiz salespeople on key findings.



6. Deliver Training with Your Diverse Workforce in Mind

Your sales training activities need to meet the learning needs of a diverse workforce.

Some reps prefer informal, bite-sized, microlearning content that can be accessed on-demand, wherever and whenever needed. Research from the Journal of Applied Psychology shows that microlearning can improve engagement with – and retention of – training content.

Career development is also deeply important to your employees; they want to learn skills to help them in a future role. For example, many sales development reps move into quota-carrying roles, like account executive or account manager. Still, the skills required to be a successful SDR don't perfectly align with the traits of a high-performing AE or AM. Identify those gaps and deliver training that helps close them.

7. Practice Responding to Objections

Buyer objections are a part of life for all salespeople, and reps who don't prepare to handle common objections will have a tough time closing deals. Ensuring salespeople have mastered key skills will prevent them from "practicing" on your buyers. But how should you address objections in your sales training?

Create training courses that break down the fundamentals of handling different types of objections. This includes misunderstandings ("I heard your software doesn't integrate with our marketing platform"), skepticism ("will your solution work for a small business?"), drawbacks ("we like your solution, but it's missing a feature we want") and indifference ("we don't need something like that").

Don't forget the importance of assessment. You should require sales reps to master their objection responses through an in-person role-play or a [coaching and practice tool] like Brainshark.

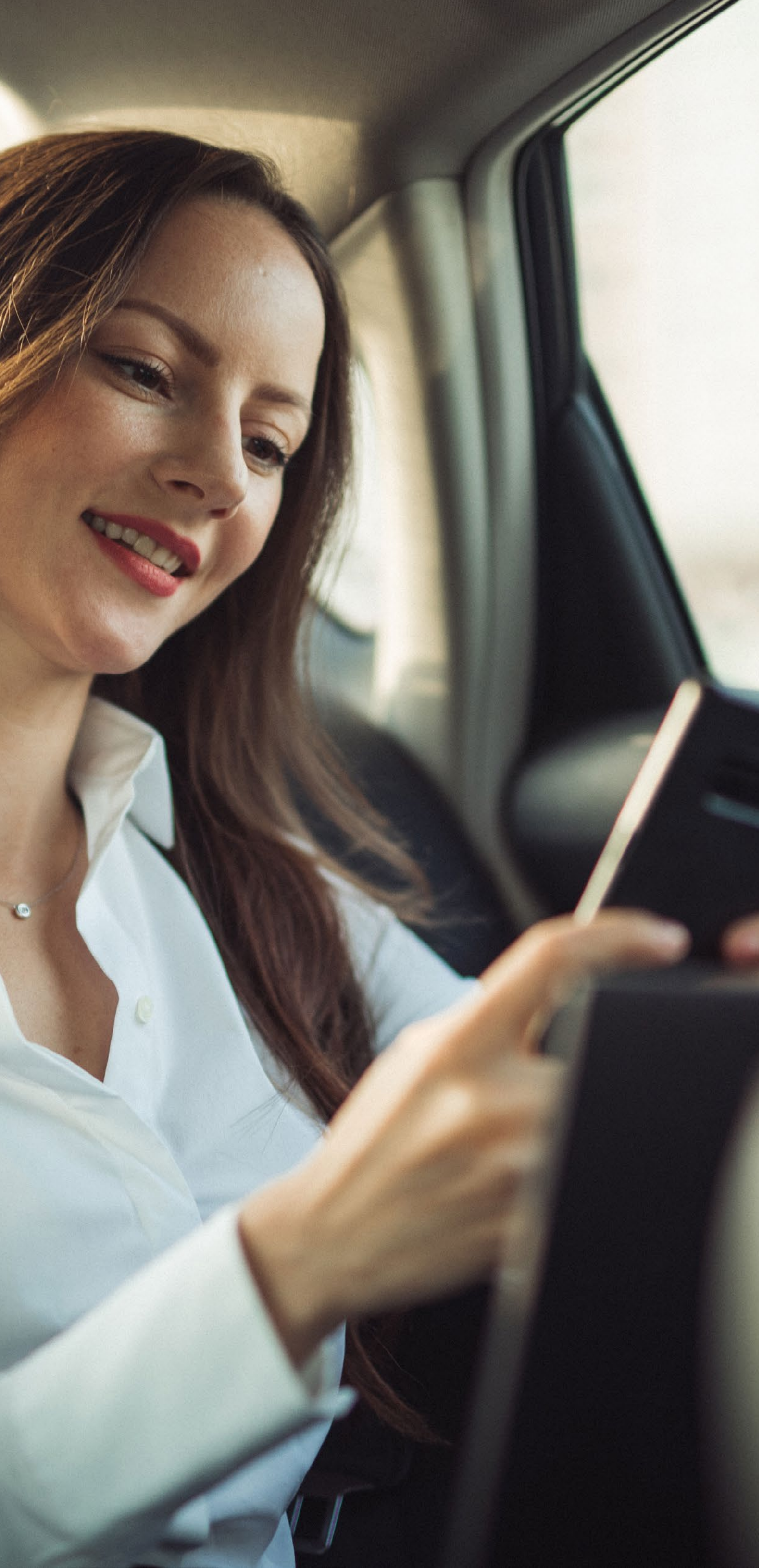
8. A Sales Process Deep-Dive

Without a firm grasp of your sales process, reps won't know which activities to perform at which buying stage, nor will they know when an opportunity has progressed from one stage to the next (e.g., when a prospect is fully qualified).

So, what can you do to ensure reps execute your sales process at a high level?

Consider creating a series of microlearning courses covering the key activities reps need to complete for each stage of the sales process and provide guidelines for completing those activities. You can supplement these courses with sales assets and in-depth tactical training that gives reps tips for handling common challenges.

For example, your discovery call training could include presentation slides, follow-up content to share with the buyer, and messaging guidelines for handling your company's most common discovery-stage objections. Reinforce the training by having reps practice objection-handling skills to receive feedback from managers or peers.



9. Get New Reps Ready Sooner with Pre-Boarding

Pre-boarding is a helpful way to ease sellers into the onboarding process before their official start dates, setting a positive tone for the new hire experience and accelerating time to productivity.

Traditional onboarding strategy typically has reps starting from “zero” when they first arrive. With a pre-boarding approach, basic training and essential to-do items are completed before Day 1.

For instance, a pre-boarding learning path might include a short overview (i.e., 10 minutes or less to complete) of your company’s history, strategy, value proposition, along with a welcome video from the CEO or exec team and a brief quiz at the end to check for comprehension.

Read more: Increase Revenue with Faster Sales Onboarding

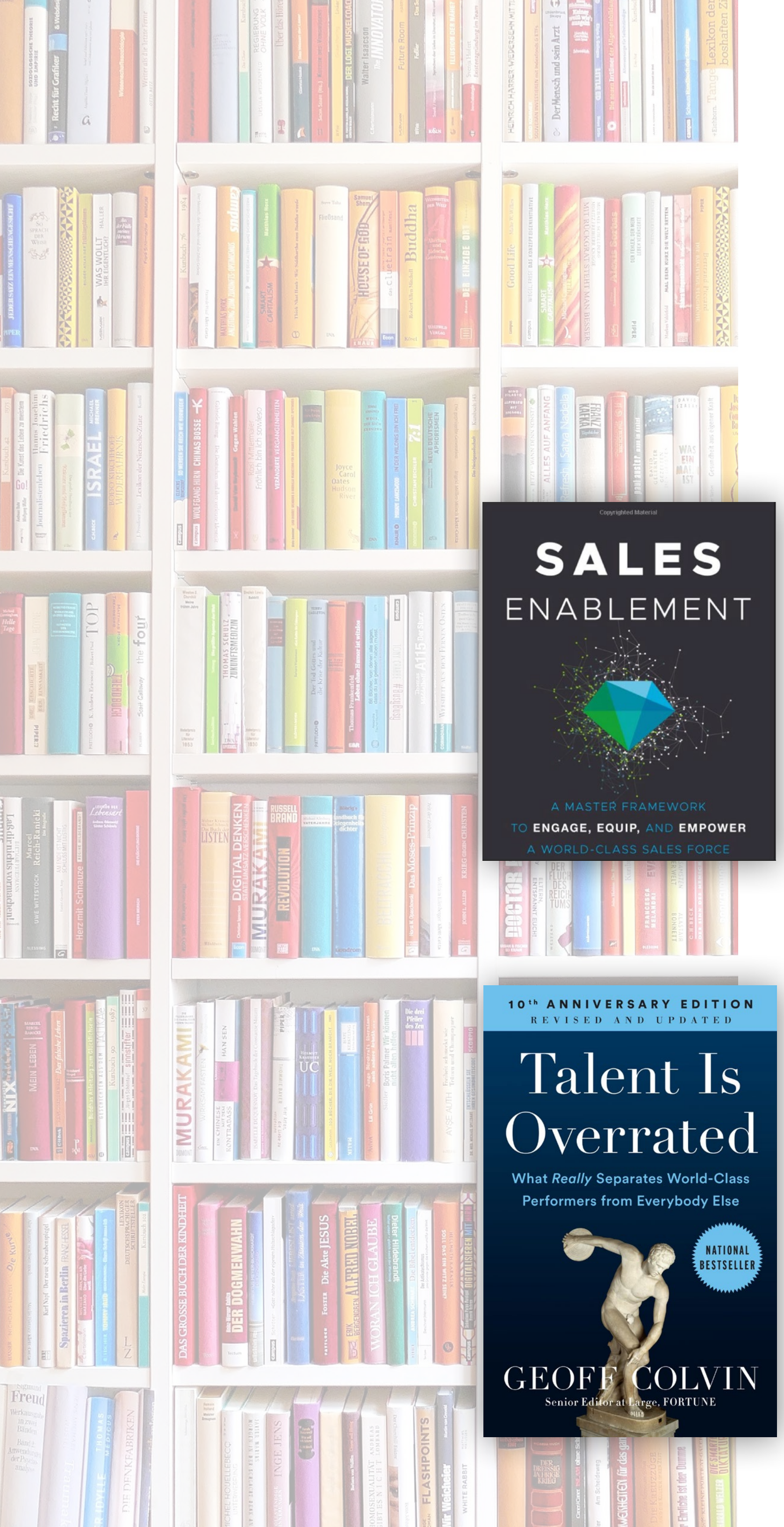
10. Put Managers into Action with "Mastery Sessions"

Consider launching a training program that empowers front-line sales managers to improve rep performance through hands-on coaching.

You can start by creating microlearning content and coaching exercises for short, manager-led "mastery sessions" that focus on a specific topic. Build these sessions around a narrow, easy-to-digest topic, such as opening a sales call, pre-call planning, or objection handling.

For in-person mastery sessions, reps can act out a simple role-play scenario, such as practicing an elevator pitch to a prospect; managers can provide feedback on the delivery and messaging.

For a remote or dispersed sales team, video coaching and practice tools are an excellent way for reps to perfect their messaging in a safe environment, share their submissions with peers for informal feedback, and then submit them to a manager as part of a formal assessment.



Helpful Sales Training Books

Looking to learn more about the latest sales training trends and best practices? These three books can be a helpful starting point:

Sales Enablement: A Master Framework to Engage, Equip, and Empower A World-Class SalesForce

Authors: Byron Matthews and Tamara Schenk

"Sales Enablement" explains (in great detail) what it takes to provide sales training, content, and coaching. Schenk and Matthews carefully outline the complexities of leading sales enablement, outline step-by-step implementation tactics, and illustrate best practices via case studies. You won't find a more comprehensive look at sales enablement and training.

Talent is Overrated

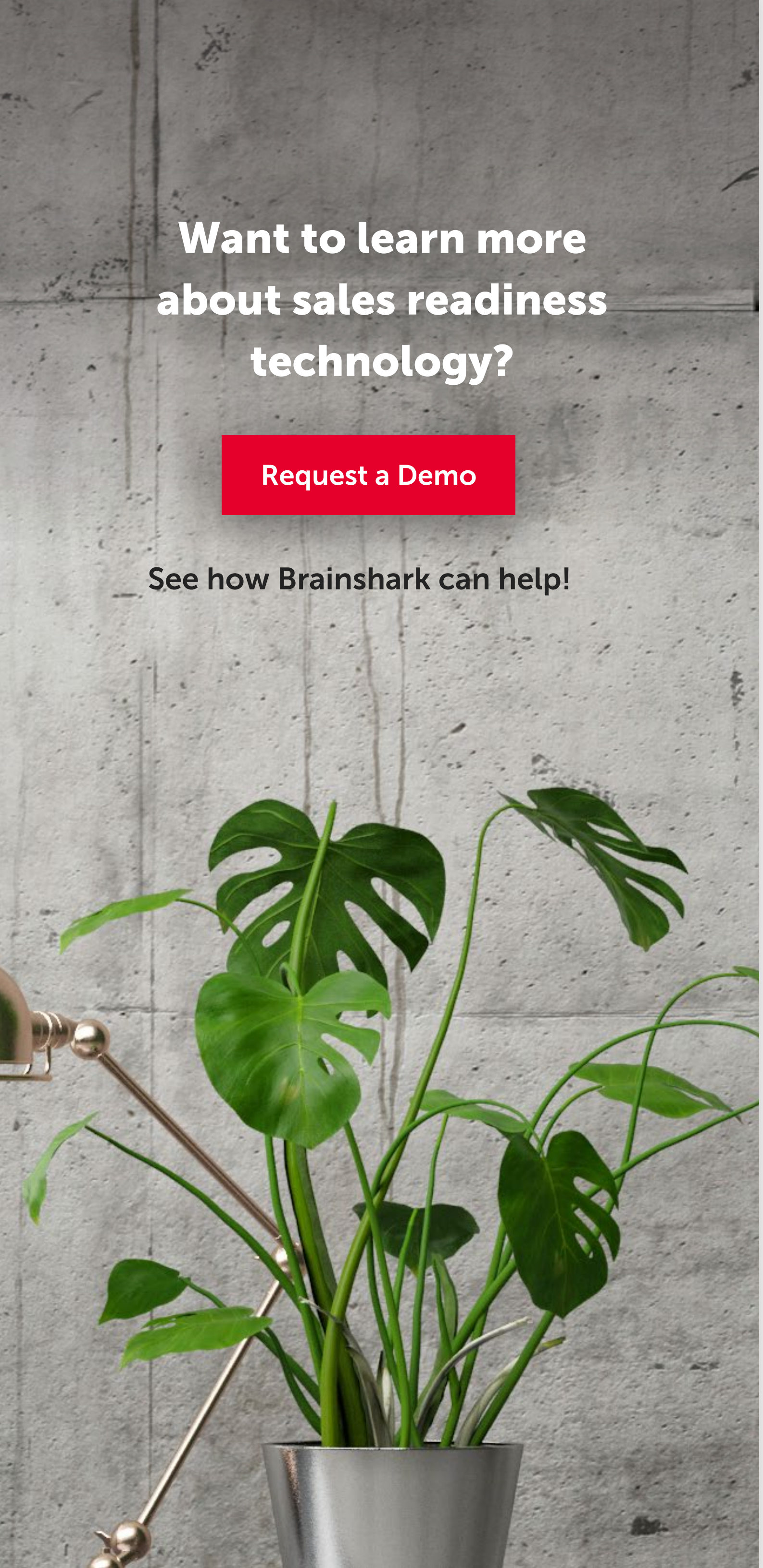
Author: Geoff Colvin

Talent is Overrated looks at what fuels success for the world's elite performers – whether they're musicians, doctors, or salespeople - by examining how they approach "deliberate practice" and how that strategy can help the rest of us achieve better results.

[Objections: The Ultimate Guide for Mastering The Art and Science of Getting Past No]

Author: Jeb Blount

To the unprepared rep, sales objections can be a huge hurdle. For well-trained sellers, however, they present an opportunity. Jeb Blount, CEO of Sales Gravy, uses his expertise to break down the realities of facing objections and how sellers can use human influence best practices to overcome roadblocks and win more business.



About Brainshark, A Bigtincan Company

Brainshark's data-driven readiness platform for sales enablement provides teams with the knowledge, skills and resources they need to perform at the highest level. With best-of-breed solutions for training and AI-powered coaching, as well as cutting-edge insights into sales performance, customers can ensure their sales reps are always ready to make the most of any selling situation.

With Brainshark, companies can: enable sales teams with microlearning or formal **training** that accelerates onboarding and keeps reps up-to-speed; validate readiness with sales **coaching** and practice that ensure reps master key messages; empower teams with dynamic **training content** that can be created quickly, updated easily and accessed anywhere; and use powerful **scorecards** to visualize sales performance trends and make real connections from improved readiness to increased revenue.

Over 1000 amazing companies use Brainshark, including many in the Fortune 500. View our collection of testimonials to hear how we help our customers get better sales enablement results.

Learn more at www.brainshark.com.