10 WAYS TO TRAIN YOUR WAY TO BETTER SALES READINESS

BRAINSHARK

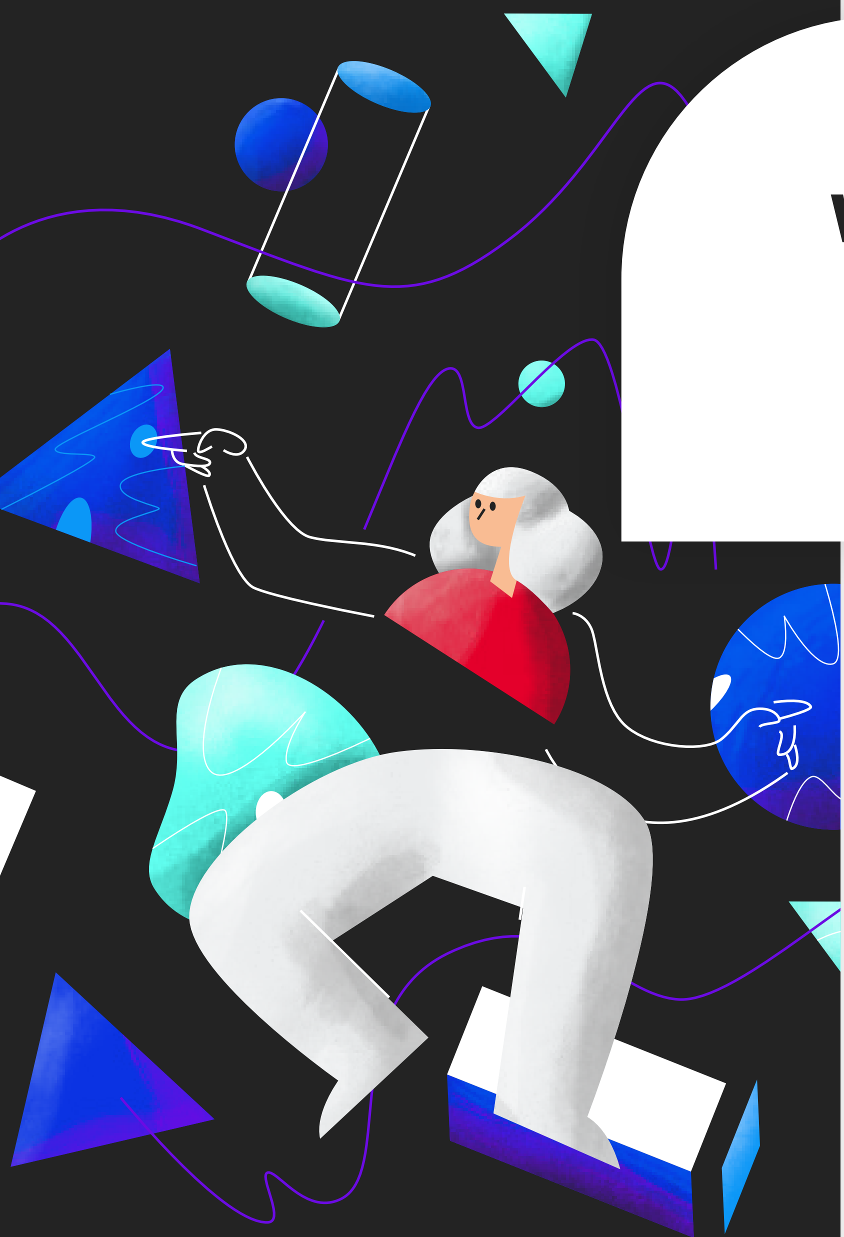
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Sales training isn't a new concept. Sales leaders have long seen its value and have been investing in training to increase sales readiness and improve outcomes. But in today's business landscape, training is more important than ever.

Even before the pandemic, the sales profession looked much different than it did even five years ago. Coupled with the events of 2020, this change accelerated even faster. Organizations were forced to adopt all things virtual regardless of how prepared they were. Today's sellers are dealing with virtual selling, increased technology usage, higher expectations of B2B buyers, decision-by-committee, M&A, product innovations... just to name a few.

With so much change occurring, it almost goes without saying reps need to know A LOT more than in years past. Have you made the changes necessary to ensure your sales training strategy has kept up with the times?



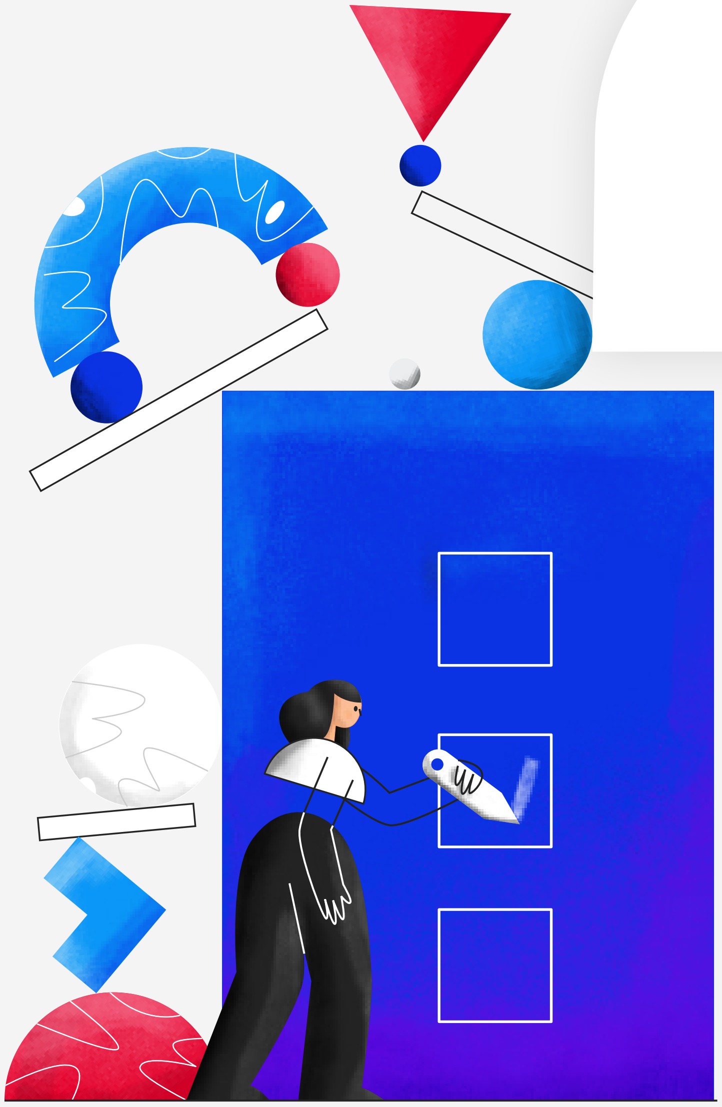
What is Sales Training? How is This Different from Sales Readiness?

To start, let's cover the basics. You may be asking yourself, "How can training impact sales readiness – aren't they the same thing?" Well, not really. Training is just the first step on the road to your ultimate goal, which should be readiness. Just because a rep has completed their training does not mean they are ready to apply what was learned in a live selling scenario. That's where sales readiness activities like practice, coaching, and assessments come into play. But make no mistake, sales training is a critical part of preparing reps to succeed.

Sales training covers a wide range of need-to-know topics for reps, from product details and key skills to process and methodology.

Today's training is delivered through learning formats like eLearning and online simulations. With virtual training the norm, technology plays a vital role. For example, instead of on-site training courses, sales reps might have on-demand access to engaging microlearning content like video-based presentations and interactive quizzes.

Sales enablement leaders from top enterprise businesses need to adjust to shifting focus areas and priorities to decide what the best training approach is for their team. To help, we'll look at 10 ways you can improve your teams through training:



1.

Integrate Assessments Into Your 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 seller confidence, and wasting time for all parties.

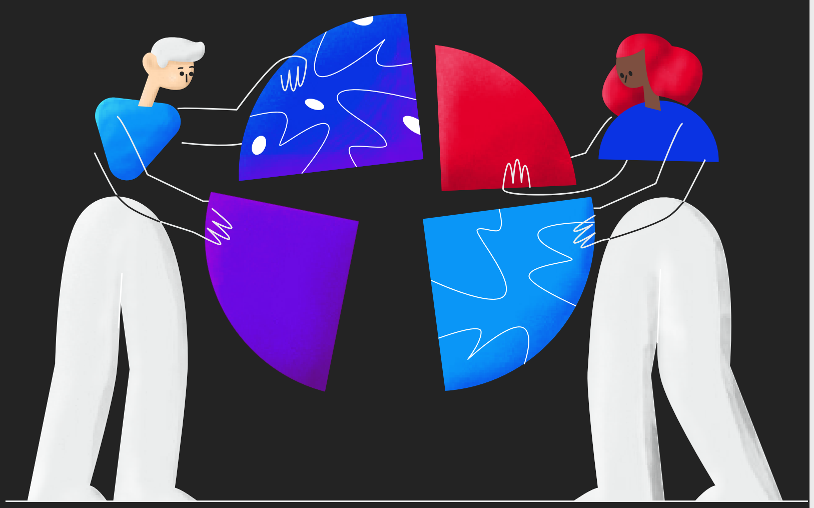
Sales enablement leaders should focus not just on learning consumption ("Did my reps finish their courses?"), but also **assessment** ("Can they perform key sales activities?") to encourage better training engagement, knowledge retention and sales readiness.

You can implement **training assessments** in a few different ways:

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

With so many organizations making the shift to a fully remote workforce, incorporating assessments into your sales readiness program is even more crucial. Assessments along with expectation setting with OKRs and dashboards will help overcome some of the challenges of remote work and help keep reps on track.

For example, if a high-performing rep just closed a competitive deal, assign a team member to interview the new customer about their challenges, steps taken to secure their commitment, which value points resonated with them, and why they chose your solution.



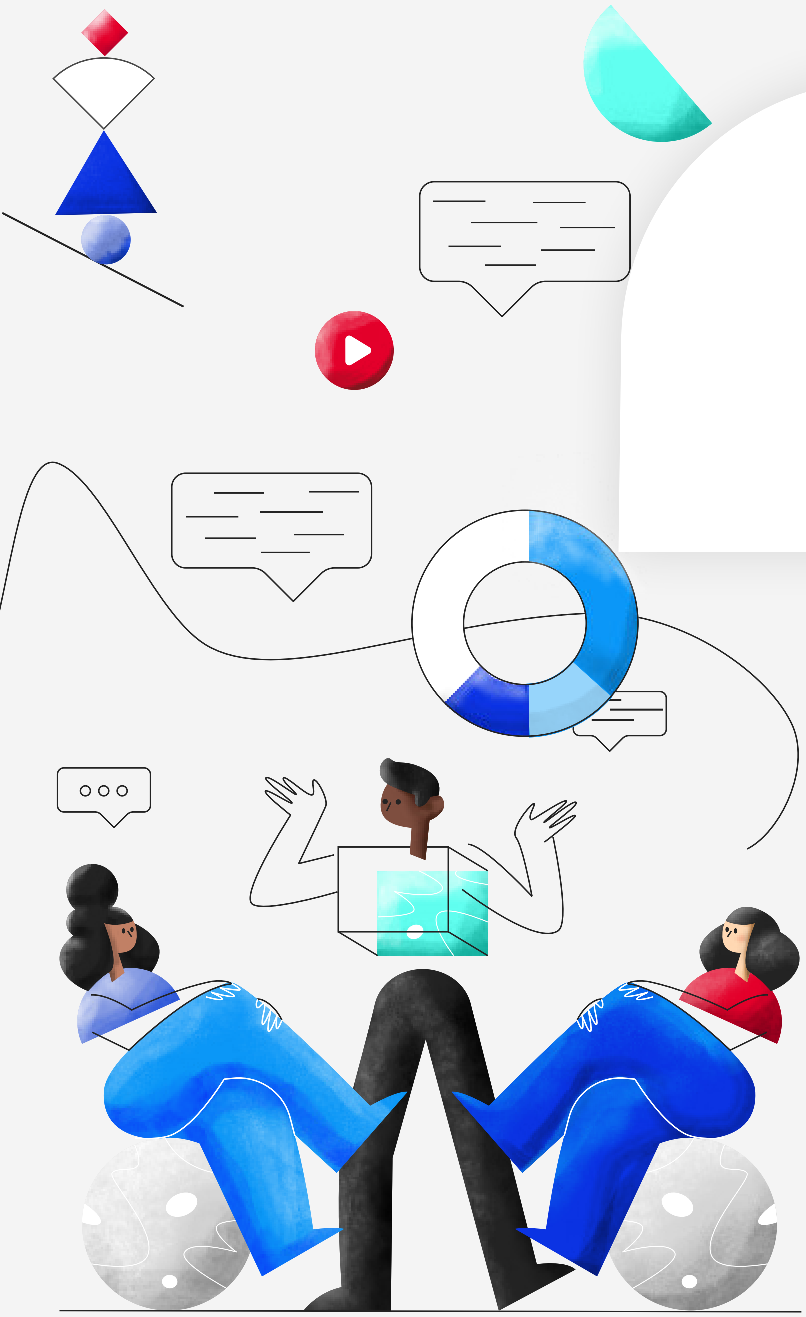
2.

Create Data-Driven Programs

Data is essential for making business decisions and while there are many metrics to consider, win-loss reports are great for giving new reps insight into what has worked (or not) in the past. To encourage knowledge sharing in your organization, you can make reports on key wins and losses available to reps as just-in-time learning assets. You can also incorporate them into training curriculums, as you can tie takeaways directly to positive (or negative) sales outcomes.

Deal losses can be just as valuable in preparing sales reps for tough 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, giving you an opportunity to incorporate the loss report into competitive intelligence training.

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



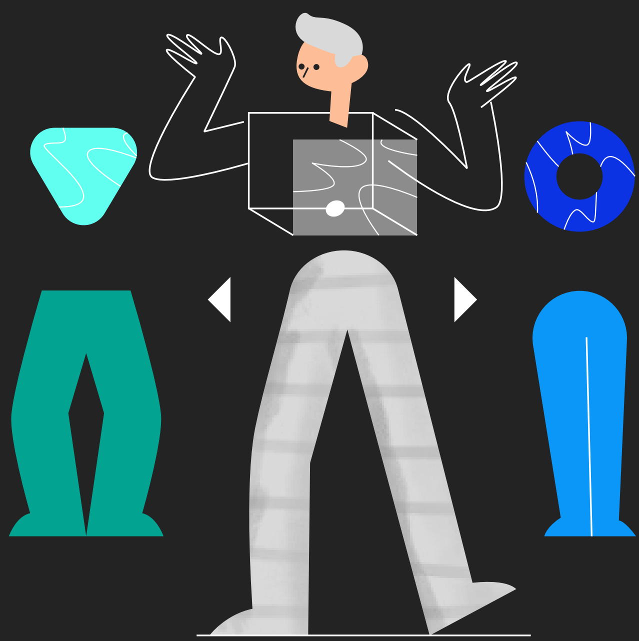
3.

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 “tribal knowledge” of veteran salespeople – before they leave the organization – and transform it into training material for sellers of all ages and experience levels. This institutional knowledge isn’t just for your new reps though. Your ‘B’ and ‘C’ players can especially benefit by learning from the practices of your star salespeople and seeing what “good” looks like in action.

These best practices are also a great resource for creating useful sales training content. One way to make that happen is using video coaching technology, which allows 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 that question can be converted into formal learning content and made available for future reference.

77% of buyers believe salespeople don't understand their business, according to Accenture.



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.

It is crucial that you make the buyer's journey a prominent part of your sales training. You can do this by ensuring your buyer persona details, including critical business challenges, success metrics, and pain points, are part of your training curriculum.

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 to help buyers move into a decision cycle. Is the prospect settled on your solution and trying to justify the purchase? Outline approaches for accelerating time to a buying decision.

In addition, you can pair sales training with coaching exercises to require reps to think like buyers. For example, if you sell security software, ask reps what points their champion might use to get the CISO on board with a new solution and how they would be best presented? What issues matter most, not only to the security lead but also to the CIO?

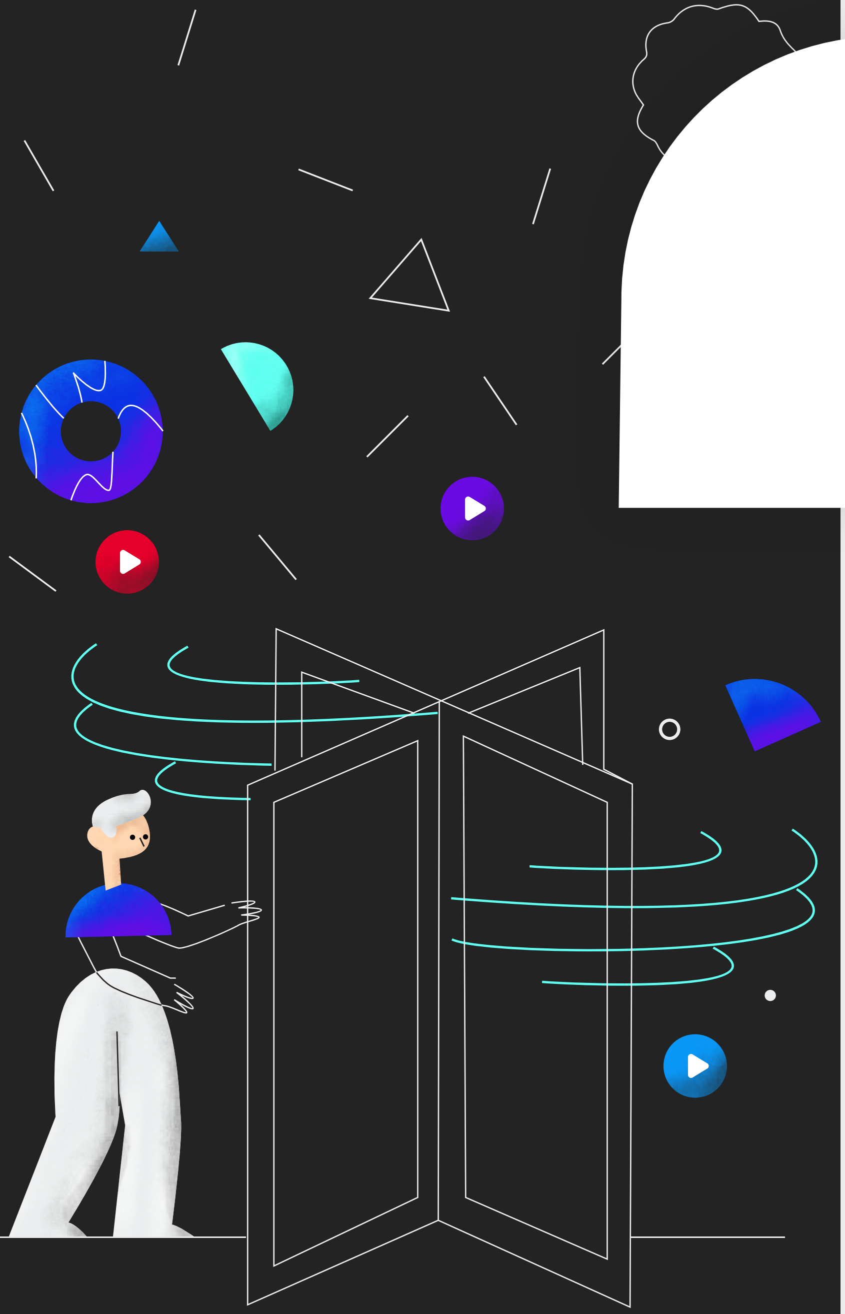
5.

Highlight Industry Trends and News

Your salespeople shouldn't be required to read 30-page research reports on the state of B2B selling, or your target markets. But a 1,000-word blog post covering timely social selling tips, on the other hand, is a perfect addition to your training strategy.

By incorporating outside perspectives into your training and delivering continuous education to the sales force, it reminds your salespeople the profession is constantly changing and encourages them to stay up-to-date.

If you are using a sales readiness platform, you can embed relevant research and news articles about target industries into training courses and make them required, to ensure reps review them to complete their training. You could then add a knowledge-check to quiz the salespeople on key findings.



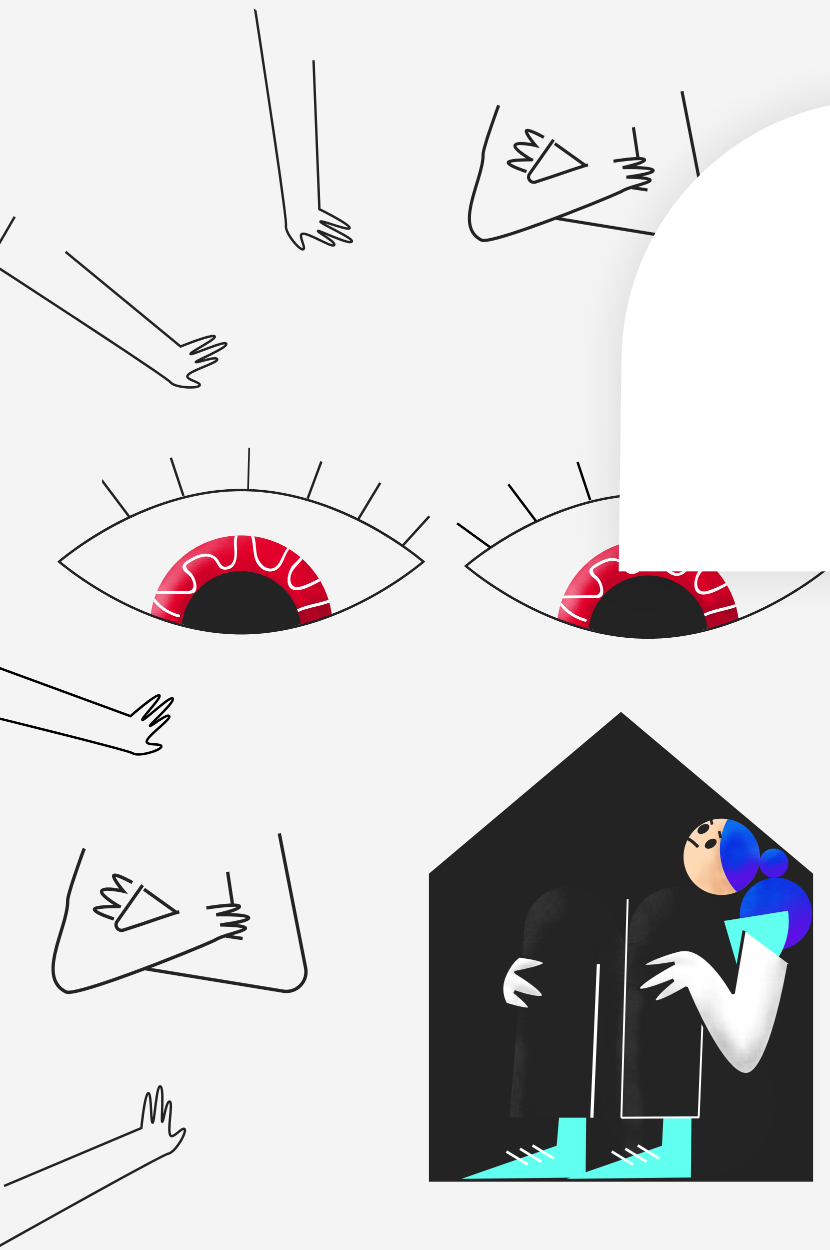
6.

Deliver Training with a Changing Workforce in Mind

About 10,000 workers retire every day, so it almost goes without saying your sales training activities need to meet the learning needs of a changing workforce.

Many sales reps prefer informal, bite-sized, microlearning content they can access on-demand, wherever and whenever it might be needed. Research from the Journal of Applied Psychology shows microlearning can improve engagement with – and retention of – your training content.

Career development is also deeply important to this new workforce; they want to learn skills that will help them in be successful in a future role. For example, many sales development reps move into quota-carrying roles, like account executive or account manager, but the skills required to be a successful SDR don't perfectly align with the traits of a high-performing AE or AM. Identifying those gaps and delivering training can help close them and help to create more effective reps in the future.



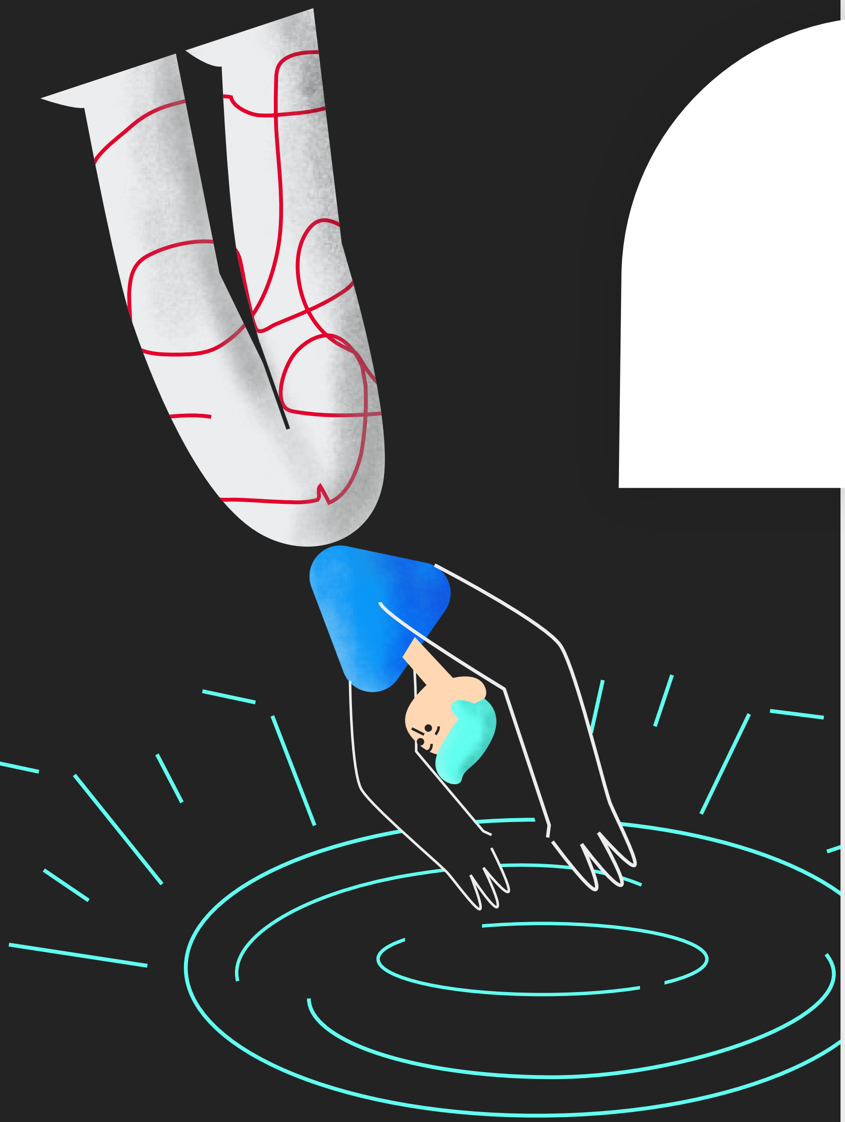
7.

Practice Responding to Objections

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

Break down the fundamentals and create training courses on the specific ways 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").

Recalling the importance of assessment, you should also require sales reps master their objection responses. This can be done by initiating video and text-based coaching activities to measure, score and certify rep preparedness and reinforce your training content.



8.

A Sales Process Deep-Dive

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

It's why 59% of sales organizations plan to invest **more** in sales process and methodology training in the coming year, according to CSO Insights. So, what can you do to ensure reps execute your sales process at a high level?

Consider creating a series of microlearning courses that cover the key activities reps need to complete at each stage of the sales process, and guidelines for how those activities should be completed. 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

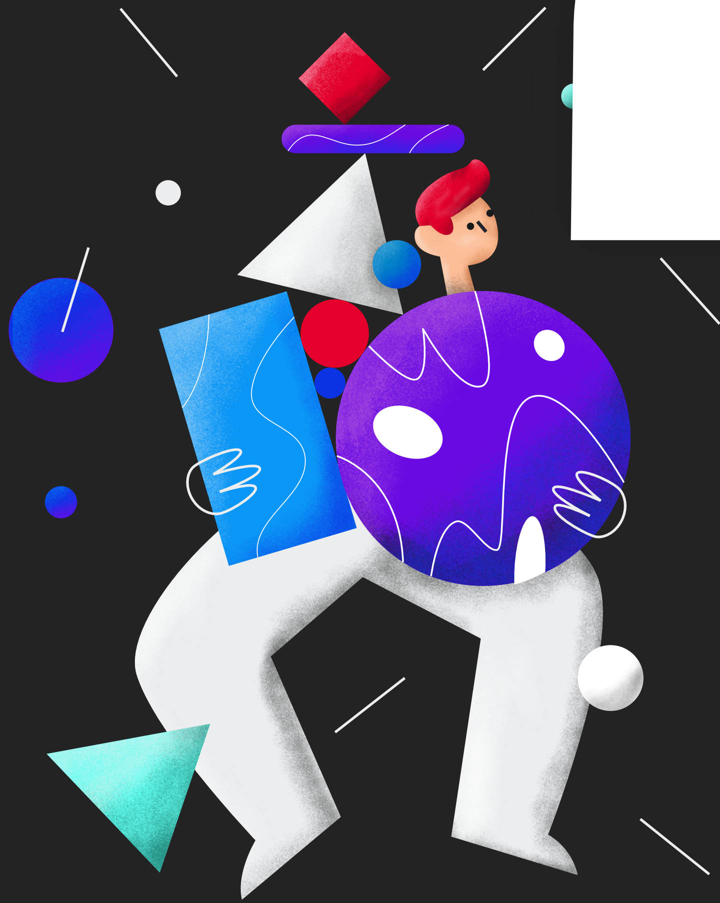
If you are like many organizations, you wait until a new rep starts to begin your onboarding but waiting until day one is too late. Starting strong – and earlier— will get new sellers moving in the right direction sooner and set the right tone for the entire process. That's why it's time to rethink what happens before your new sales hires first day by making preboarding part of your sales onboarding strategy.

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

Compared to a traditional onboarding strategy, which might have reps starting from "zero" when they first arrive, a pre-boarding strategy ensures basic training and important to-do items have been completed before Day 1 – hardware and software setup, sales manager availability for the rep's first week, etc.

This approach creates extra momentum and helps sellers hit the ground running in their new role. When done well, pre-boarding fully prepares sellers for their first week by:

- Providing clear expectations for reps and their managers
- Enabling new hires to quickly connect with the company
- Defining who in the organization owns each part of the onboarding process



10.

Put Managers into Action

By offering hands-on coaching you can utilize your front-line managers more effectively in your training programs and improve rep performance and readiness.

You can start by creating microlearning content and coaching exercises for short, manager-led sessions focused on a specific topic. These sessions should be built around a narrow, easy-to-digest topic, such as opening a sales call, pre-call planning or objection handling.

Traditionally, many training programs included in-person mastery sessions where 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. With more and more sales teams dispersed - video coaching and practice tools offer an excellent way for remote reps to perfect their messaging in a virtual environment, share their submissions with peers for informal feedback, and then submit them to a manager as part of a formal assessment.

Conclusion

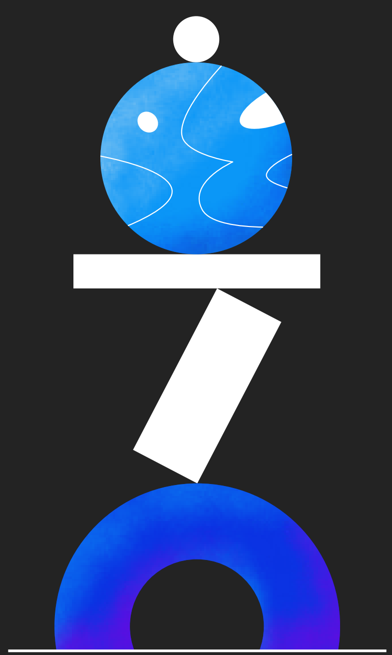
Many organizations have struggled to transition into a virtual world because their training programs had grown stale and relied too much on old-school tactics, like on-site bootcamps and long-winded presentations that cause information overload for new reps and an increased time to productivity.

If you're focused on staying current with sales training and readiness best-practices, including leveraging technology to make the most of our virtual world, you'll empower all your sales teams with the knowledge, skills and insights they need to perform at the highest level.

Want to learn more about sales readiness technology?

See a Demo: www.brainshark.com/see-a-demo

Contact Sales: www.brainshark.com/contact-sales



About Brainshark

Brainshark's data-driven sales enablement and readiness platform provides client-facing teams with the knowledge, skills and resources they need to perform at the highest level. With best-of-breed solutions for training and 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 on-demand 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 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.

Thousands of customers – including more than half of the Fortune 100 – rely on Brainshark to close performance gaps and get better results from their sales enablement initiatives. Learn more at www.brainshark.com.