Quick Guide for

Coaching Remote Sales Teams

BRAINSHARK

Introduction

There's no question that coaching is a major driver of sales performance. According to a recent report from CSO Insights: "For the last five years, sales coaching has had the greatest impact on win rates and quota attainment."

But today, there are questions about how to design and deliver coaching effectively. With pre-pandemic norms rapidly upended, what worked months ago often no longer applies – and many organizations are reimagining their coaching programs for a remote-work reality.

Here we'll provide tips for coaching your remote teams, so you can maximize the benefits of your coaching program – regardless of where reps and their managers are working.

1.
Plan for what you can see

Today, with buyer and seller needs (and circumstances) in near-constant flux, coaching programs can't be inflexibly tied to a long-term plan. Instead, it's important for sales enablement teams to be agile and adaptable: developing shorter-term coaching plans that map to current corporate goals, priorities and realities.

Aim to review and assess your coaching program **monthly**, with sales enablement sharing plans and upcoming activities with sales managers, sales leaders and corporate leadership – soliciting their input and feedback.

Key components to successful planning include:

- **Clear and agreed-upon goals,** along with a way to measure them – ideally tying metrics to leading indicators of revenue (pipeline, opportunities created, etc.)
- **Strong, frequent communication and collaboration** among sales enablement, sales managers and sales leadership.

For example, sales enablement should have a running dialog with sales managers and leaders – asking questions like: "What trends and challenges are you seeing among reps?" and "What's the most important thing we can work on and reinforce with your team?" Common and pressing answers then get reflected in coaching plans and activities.

- **More topical and situational coaching,** geared toward today's times. Depending on your organizational needs, coaching might reinforce how to take an empathetic approach in buyer conversations, use new technologies effectively, and connect productively with customers in a virtual setting.
- **Role-specific coaching.** Coaching should not be one-size-fits-all but, rather, tailored to reps' needs, skills and roles. For a new product launch, for instance, business development reps (BDRs), front-line sellers, account managers and sales engineers all have different responsibilities. To support a successful launch, coaching and enablement programs should be customized to those roles.
- **Manager commitment and prioritization.** The best coaching plans, activities and infrastructure can't drive results if no one implements them. So the active and enthusiastic participation of sales managers and coaches is integral to success. In the planning process and beyond, managers must commit to making time for coaching, and leadership should help them make this a priority.

Ready to elevate your remote coaching? Schedule a Brainshark demo!

2.
Leverage technology

Not too long ago, before an important meeting with a prospective buyer, coaching with a field sales rep might have transpired like this: Pre-call planning and strategy session over breakfast, with the manager giving the rep some last-minute tips.

Then, later in the day, the manager might also join the sales meeting – observing the rep in action and participating in the conversation. Afterward, an in-person debrief and coaching session: with the manager providing advice on areas for improvement and next steps.

Now, interactions like that one (and myriad others) are being reshaped with technology for an online-only setting. In the process, organizations are often discovering new and even better ways to drive efficiencies and conduct coaching at scale.

Leading companies are now using a range of technologies to refine and improve coaching – enabling them to:

- **Simulate a virtual "open door."** Managers can use messaging, collaboration and conferencing applications to make themselves available to their reps for quick questions and one-off coaching – enabling reps to bounce ideas off them. Managers should also let reps know the fastest and best ways to reach them.
- **Help reps prepare and practice for buyer interactions** using use video-based coaching technologies. These tools can also be used to reinforce and assess key knowledge and skills, anytime, anywhere – without the need for reps' and coaches' schedules to align.
- **Observe buyer interactions,** both in-the-moment and asynchronously with call-recording software (also referred to as conversation intelligence). Managers can subsequently provide coaching and feedback.
- **Design multi-modal coaching programs,** incorporating various technologies and approaches geared toward different learning styles, along with multiple opportunities for reinforcement.

The Power of Video Coaching for Remote Teams

Oftentimes, it's not convenient for coaching to transpire live, especially with reps and managers balancing busy work schedules and busy home lives today.

With asynchronous coaching and practice solutions like Brainshark, companies can help their reps become more confident and competent – no matter where and when they're working – and can empower managers anywhere to reinforce key messages and skills.

Using today's coaching platforms, reps receive assignments to complete: demonstrating how they'd message a new product to a buyer, handle common objections and respond to other scenarios. They can rehearse in a comfortable practice environment, and send a video or text file of themselves, responding to the assignment, through the system for peer review and then for manager feedback as well.

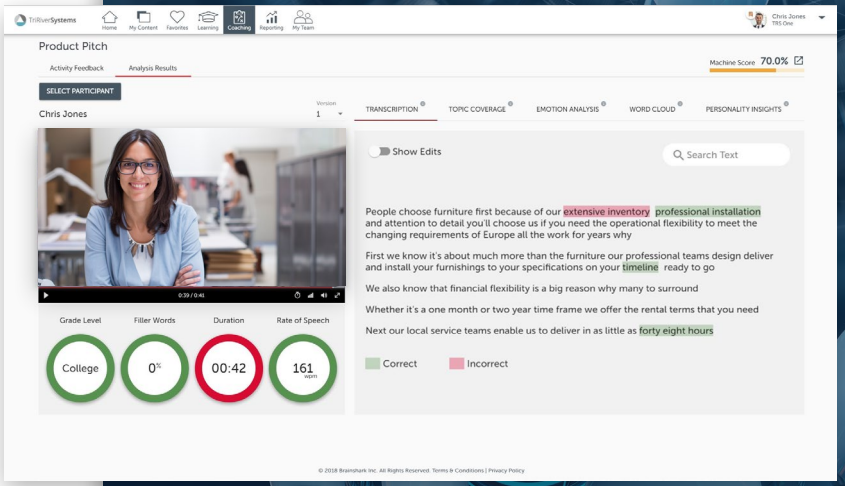
And with **machine scoring** layered in, video-based coaching gets even more streamlined and scalable. Brainshark's Machine Analysis engine can process reps' video submissions – providing automated scoring and feedback that shows managers which reps need the most help and on what.

In addition, with many buyer-seller interactions occurring on video these days, on-camera presentation skills and delivery are especially important. Machine Analysis delivers objective insights into presentation aspects that impact buyers' perceptions: including reps' ability to stay on-message, emotions and personality traits exuded, rate of speech and more.

Want to learn more about video coaching? Schedule a Brainshark demo!

"Technologies like Machine Analysis make sales professionals and their managers even better in their roles"

–**Jim Dickie,** Research Fellow, Sales Mastery



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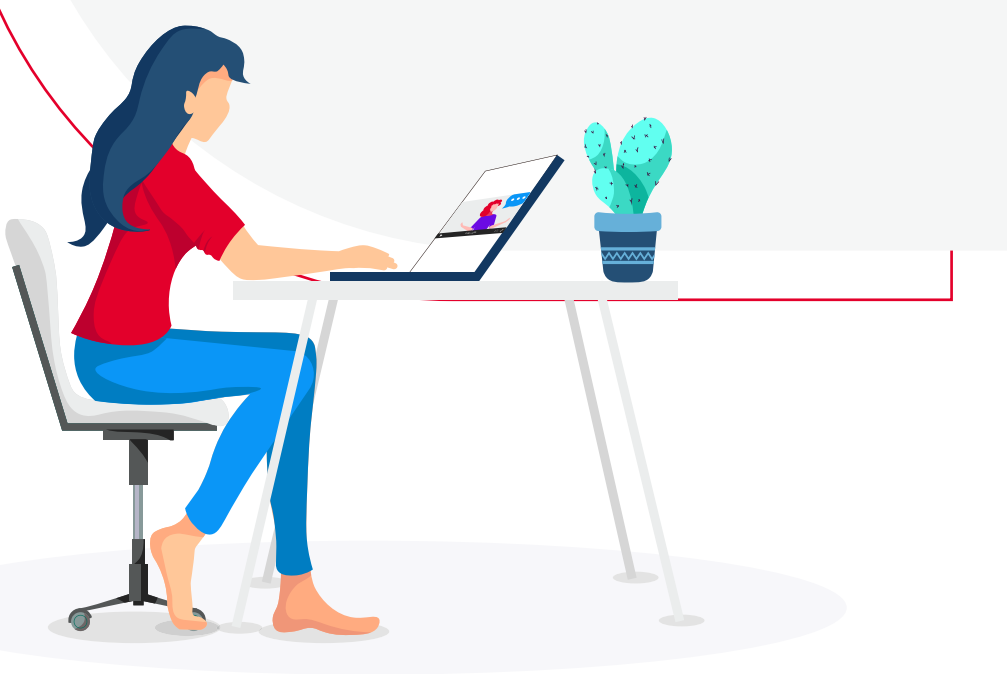
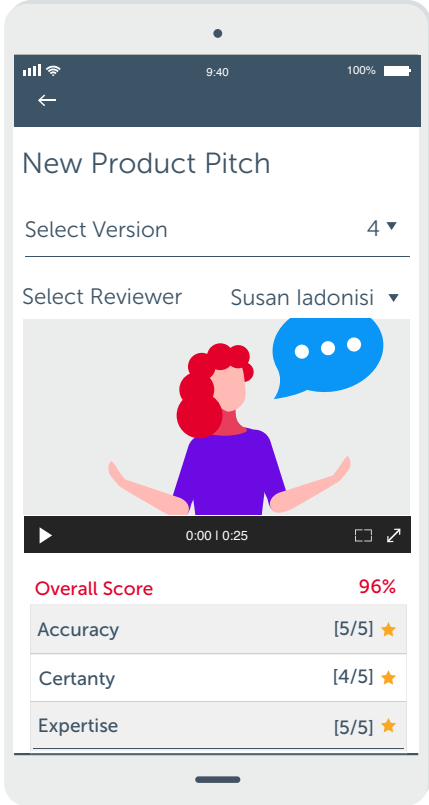
3.
Simulate the water cooler with peer coaching



Coaching is most effective and sticks when it comes not just from managers and formal coaches, but also from peers. Getting advice from someone else "in the trenches" – whom reps respect and whose success they want to emulate – can help motivate reps to improve their own performance.

In the absence of a physical "water cooler" where reps can swap stories and learn from one another, try to foster other opportunities for peer mentorship and coaching.



For example:

- **Share outstanding submissions to video coaching assignments** – so other reps can see and model what "good" looks like. By highlighting the top responses, managers have another opportunity to reinforce the desired knowledge and skills in their coaching activities, and reps are motivated to perform their best.
- **Encourage all reps to share their best practices**, successes and productivity hacks via brief videos. You can solicit input from top-performers too – asking them to provide tips and solutions that address common problem areas. Store these "bite-sized" videos centrally, and make them available as resources. Also consider featuring this content on various team channels to inspire reps with new ideas.
- **Make it easy to gather peer input and perspectives.** For example, video coaching technology like Brainshark enables reps to seek and incorporate feedback from their peers.

Want to see remote peer learning in action?

Schedule a Brainshark demo!

4.
Use data to diagnose issues

Whether you're working from the office or working homebound, you'll want to know: How well are your coaching and training initiatives preparing your reps? Are they truly ready for buyer conversations?

With a **data-driven approach** to measuring readiness, you can quickly answer these questions and more. But rather than manually pulling data from a variety of systems, creating and wrangling with "monster spreadsheets," or enlisting your company's data experts (all for just partial visibility), you can use technology to gain these insights instantly.

For example, Brainshark's Readiness Scorecards automatically synthesize and display readiness data – giving deep visibility into the readiness of reps and teams, all from an interactive screen.

"Scorecards will be able to show not only how [reps] are doing and what we're doing in a rolling period, but we can marry it with [sales] production."

Gary Milwit, Executive Director, Learning & Organizational Development, J.G. Wentworth

With scorecards, you can:

- Put the power of data into the hands of any rep, manager or sales leader.
- Compare reps to peers, examine performance vs. goals, and track data over time.
- Diagnose what's working and what isn't – before it impacts performance.
- Tailor coaching programs, at both the group and 1-to-1 level, based on the actionable scorecard insights.
- See the impact of coaching and other readiness activities on leading indicators of revenue.

Interested in data-driven coaching? Schedule a Brainshark demo!

5.
Consider reps' needs

As you put your coaching plans into action, it's important to do so in a way that's mindful of today's unique and evolving circumstances.

For example, with so many employees now working from home, there are likely more responsibilities and distractions for your sales reps and other client-facing employees to contend with. It's likely that work – while getting done – isn't fitting neatly into a 9-to-5 schedule.

So just as sales reps are encouraged to take an empathetic approach with buyers, it makes sense that sales managers, coaches and leadership should take a similar one with their reps.

While driving productivity and fostering accountability, coaches can:

- **Check in with reps on their needs.** Where do reps think they're struggling? What areas would they like more coaching on?
- **Deliver positive feedback** alongside constructive criticism, in a way that keeps reps motivated.
- **Not be afraid to overcommunicate.** During these times, and given everyone's busy schedules, it's often helpful to communicate messages on multiple channels and give reminders. Managers – along with sales enablement and sales leadership – should help keep important assignments, milestones and deadlines top-of-mind for sellers.
- **Provide coaching that isn't schedule-dependent** – enabling reps to practice and consume feedback, and for managers to offer input, when it's convenient for them.
- **Strive to make coaching more scalable** through the use of enabling technologies and sales readiness solutions.

These times present companies with many challenges – but with them, there are also opportunities. As organizations look to reshape and reimagine sales coaching for remote teams, their planning exercises and technology usage can help meet their needs today, while driving efficiencies that last into the future.

Ready for a better way to coach remote teams?
Schedule a Brainshark demo!

About Brainshark

Brainshark's data-driven sales readiness platform provides the tools to prepare client-facing teams with the knowledge and skills 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.

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