BRIEF

5 Ways to Speed Up Your Sales Onboarding

Sales enablement touches so many different parts of a business that it's not always easy to prioritize your initiatives. There's content to create, sales kickoff to plan, training courses to develop, and always fires to put out.

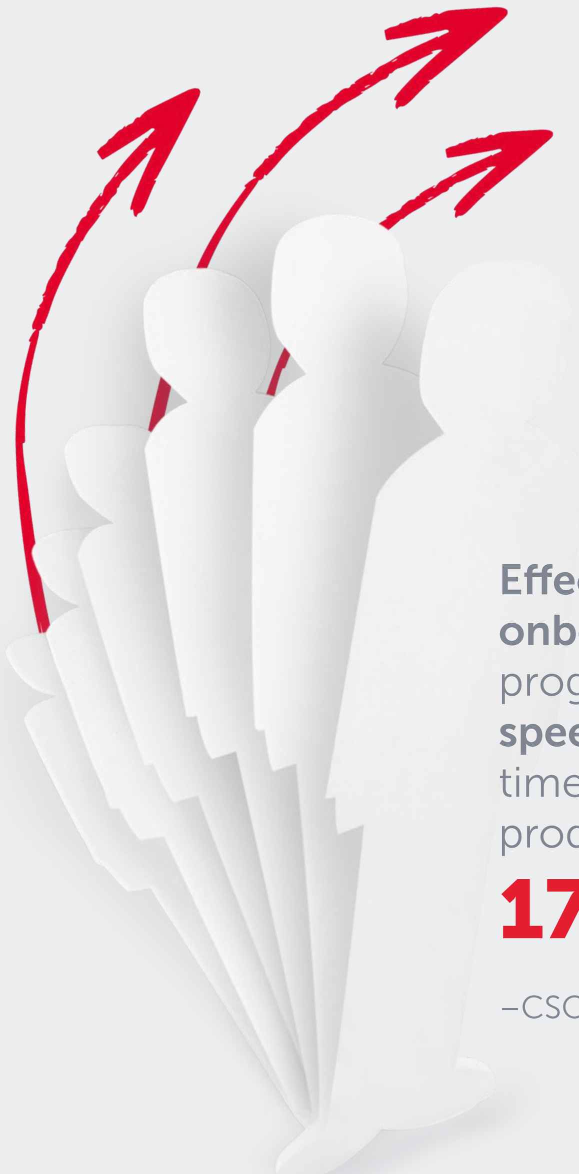
But if there's one area that deserves every practitioner's attention, it's sales onboarding. Why?

- Every single seller you hire needs to be ramped, no matter how much experience they have
- Most sales onboarding programs could stand to improve
- The faster reps ramp, the quicker they can start contributing to the business

And when onboarding is fast and effective, it can reduce ramp times by 3.4 months and improve quota attainment by 7% – making speed an especially critical part of your new hire training approach.

It's sales enablement's job to not only design an onboarding program that delivers the right skills and knowledge, but to make it an efficient process that decreases time to productivity and gives you the best chance at achieving sales goals.

Check out this brief for 5 helpful tactics for accelerating sales onboarding in any organization.



Effective onboarding programs **speed up** time to full productivity by

17.9%

–CSO Insights

1. Start Onboarding Sooner

Traditionally, onboarding begins on the new hire's first official day with the company. A speedier onboarding strategy would include "pre-boarding," which gets sales learning started *before* Day 1, giving reps a chance to hit the ground running during that critical first week.

Pre-boarding can be as simple as creating a short training course that gives reps a high-level overview of company products and solutions, value proposition, target industries and buyer personas. The key here is to make this learning package available as soon as a new seller's paperwork clears.

Ensuring that key details are covered by the HR, IT and sales enablement teams – such as hardware setup and shipment, software licensing, and Week 1 interactions with the new hire's manager – will also lead to a smoother, faster onboarding process.

2. Make Microlearning a Priority

In-person bootcamps, which are a common onboarding tactic, hit reps with a ton of new information at once – information they often forget once they start selling. Long, live training sessions can also require major resources, like travel expenses and time commitments from subject matter experts.

Microlearning courses improve knowledge retention by delivering new information in a series of "bite-sized" chunks, such as short videos, animated presentations, and infographics. This makes the learning more consumable (and retainable).

Sales readiness technology allows sellers to easily access microlearning content on the go and progress through onboarding at their own pace. Video-based courses can even be further enhanced with attachments, links, and interactive quizzes. This makes learning on the job easy and flexible, whether reps are traveling, at home, or visiting a client.

3. Build Learning Around High-Value Activities

The average sales hire spends 10 weeks in training and development and takes 11.2 months to become productive, according to the Sales Management Association.

To cut time to productivity, focus sales onboarding around key activities that lead to closed deals – such as prospecting, discovery, and solution demo – and map your learning paths around the **knowledge and skills** each role needs to perform those activities. For each key activity, you'd design a "learning sprint" where reps must complete relevant training and assessments in a given time period.

Account executives (AEs), for example, might have 3 weeks to get a handle on prospecting. AEs would spend that time mastering buyer personas, competitors, use cases, and related skills, and pass an assessment certifying their ability to prospect. They'd then start prospecting to clients while working on the next sprint on their learning path.

With shorter periods of training and coaching, this "agile" onboarding approach allows sales reps to start performing revenue-creating activities sooner while they master other aspects of their roles.

4. Shadow the A-Players

Peers can be priceless resources for new salespeople. They know your organization well and have already spent months (or years) selling in your target markets. It's not surprising that **91%** of sales reps believe peer learning helps them succeed, according to ATD.

Try pairing new hires with high-performers and create a checklist of learning activities for each duo. The mentees might observe three of the tenured rep's calls in their first 30 days. In turn, the mentor can lead a "pre-brief" and "debrief" explaining how they approach each call and their thought process behind it.

If you're onboarding reps in a large or dispersed organization, you can also use a video coaching tool to capture best practices from the A-players on each team. Top reps can record short, informal videos describing something as simple as an effective cold-calling strategy or how they won their biggest deal. The best examples often make great additions to formal training content!

By harnessing this institutional knowledge and turning it into something new hires can benefit from, you're taking heat off the sales enablement or training team and reducing the number of "breaks" in the onboarding process. This helps firms proactively address any sales learning roadblocks early on.

Putting AI to Work

Brainshark's AI-powered Machine Analysis engine can instantly score video coaching submissions based on several areas of rep performance, including speaking rate, use of filler words ('um' or 'like'), and coverage or avoidance of key topics.

This automated machine scoring not only helps teams more **quickly determine which new hires need extra coaching**, but it also allows reps to get feedback faster, so they can **start improving right away.**

5. Gain Insight into Your Onboarding Process

Time to productivity is an important measure of sales onboarding success, but it's also a lagging indicator. Knowing whether your program is working right now will help you course-correct sooner – and avoid waiting months to realize that new reps are struggling.

Using a sales readiness platform, sales enablement teams can leverage onboarding data in a few ways:

1. See which training courses are being viewed, and for how long, to better understand **what content is (or isn't) resonating** with new reps.

2. Track the **learning progress** of individuals and teams using intuitive dashboards, ensuring sales hires complete required courses and assessments on time – and that managers are holding each accountable.

3. Better understand **whether sellers have mastered onboarding material** using video coaching, whereby they "stand and deliver" what they've learned and submit a recording for scoring and feedback. If reps are consistently struggling with certain skills (e.g. objection-handling), teams can review and re-calibrate related training as needed.

4. Generate **scorecards to gain greater visibility** into the sales activities of new hires both during and after onboarding. This makes it easier to identify performance challenges that need to be readdressed with additional training, while providing insight into how new rep output is measuring up with that of others on their teams.

Want to learn more about sales readiness technology?
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