



# Don't get me started on...



## Sales training

Let's be clear, your sales staff do not walk on water (whatever they may believe) and it absolutely is possible to teach old dogs new tricks. Sales training on a regular basis can sharpen the mind, develop new thinking about approaches and deliver helpful techniques; it can strengthen teams and improve communications. On the other hand you, like many sales managers probably feel that you can't afford to take the team out of the field for a week, that you want permanent change not a brief burst of energy and some acronyms.



You need practical stuff not complex methods that go straight in the bin along with the shiny flash cards with the pretty diagrams showing how prospects should behave.

### So...

Investing in people always pays off if it's done sensibly, it's just necessary to challenge the way "we've always done it" and work out a better way. Here are some ideas for starters:

### Individual ownership

It's their career; they should be prepared to invest effort and time in building their own skill but as we grow older we get increasingly resistant to being told things. The basics are best learned in whatever way suits each individual. Don't waste valuable team time on the basics, it can feel patronising and switch folk off, use team time where it really helps which is practising techniques and learning through shared experience.

### Be very clear about your sales model

Identify what you need to do to replicate early successes. That's partly about capturing the process, partly the right tools but a critical part is going to be an appropriate sales methodology. Appropriate means one that takes the mystery out of selling, lets everyone communicate in the same terms and develops the skills that are key to winning your type of business.

### Drip feed, don't do it big bang

"On the job training" is pragmatic and gets results. The mind can only accept what the bum can endure so keep it to short sharp bursts with the opportunity to practice on real prospects between sessions. Why use theoretical, artificial case studies when you could work on real deals? Mix training sessions with practical experience. Sharing this experience creates common ground and makes it memorable.

### Keep it simple, focus on the basics

The sales training company may well think that a three inch binder with the course notes is a mark of their professionalism, for the sales team it's a one liner on the CV and a lump of shelf-ware. Concentrating on a few key techniques that actually are remembered and usable lays the foundation for real improvement.

### Make it cultural

Make it part of the way you do business. Monitor how the sales methods are being used to close sales, grab what works, share it around, bin what doesn't work.

### Use the technology

"What gets measured gets done," so use your CRM system to report on where you are and what's being done to develop and close sales. In individual reviews and team meetings use facts, (not anecdotes and rumour) to highlight those who use what they've learned and the results they get from doing it. Show people what "good looks like" and what it can achieve.

### Practising what we preach...

We do believe with a passion that there are better ways of training sales than some of the conventional approaches ...

A sale is exciting and needs to be taught that way!

Steering away from theoretical approaches and concentrating on what's needed to close real deals is fun.

We'd suggest that a pragmatic sales training plan would be along the following lines:

- Step 1** understand what works well and what doesn't, set realistic levels of change and plan how to go about it.
- Step 2** Get the team to refresh the basics using computer based workbooks in their own time with access to a trainer (call them a coach) if appropriate.
- Step 3** Hold a series of workshop style training sessions over a period of a month or so. Go for three each lasting half a day with at least a week between them.
- Step 4** Provide regular mentoring on an as-needed basis to develop the whole team and fill in the gaps.

"It's Sales training Jim, but not as we know it..."