Business Sales Training - Introduction

Sales training is an integral and fundamental part of the business operational cycle. Improperly trained salespersons often end up providing false assurances, and erroneous commitments that the management later finds too expensive to repair.

There's a saying, "A good sales-person is the one, who sells a comb on a profit to a bald man, making the man feel good about it." In the present scenario of unemployment in countries like India, there is an emerging scope for a good salesman with many top-notch employers.

In a Corporate organization, be it small or huge, there is a key position called the **Sales Manager** that the bosses love the most, and they implore their HR department to leave no stone unturned in hiring the most suitable person for that position.

The prime duties of a Sales Manager include –

- Set Sales Goals and Quotas
- Build a Sales Plan
- Analyze Data
- Assign Sales Territories

- Mentor the Members of his/her Sales Team
- Being Involved in the Hiring and Firing Process

Apart from all the above-mentioned duties, the most important role of a Sales Manager is to provide Sales Training to the members in his team. This training will help them in delivering their targets and prove their productivity.

Business Sales Training - Different Skillsets

There are many skills a sales manager must be equipped with. These are essential for their careers as well as the smooth functioning of their own department. While intending to conduct sales training for your subordinates, there are some important skills that they must employ in planning the training chart.

Whichever rank or position you hold in the management, to be a successful sales trainer, the most important skills stand out as **communication** and **motivational skills**. These skills may specifically be applied for **training, coaching** and **counselling** but there is a contradiction too.

Sometimes, circumstances and the person you are dealing with might force you to engage in a separate set of skills. This is where we will come to the differences between training, coaching, and counselling –

Training

This is the first level of information sharing, where managers share a set of instructions that their salespeople are expected to follow while going for the sales. This method involves an active participation from the trainer, as he is expected to train them on all important factors.

This method of communicating details about the product and process is generally followed with first-time salespeople, for whom this job is their first job. The trainer creates scenarios and preps them for possible situations.

Coaching

Sometimes, your team will have a mixture of inexperienced and experienced people. While the inexperienced people might appreciate all your inputs, the experienced ones might feel a little underwhelmed. This happens as the experienced people have already learnt all these stuff from previous employers or even through exposure to different scenarios in real life.

With such employees, the managers don't interfere with their working style and just provide them with the product knowledge and monitor their progress and working style. The managers only come into the picture when assistance is needed in a real-life scenario.

Counselling

Counselling is an everlasting process and continues throughout an employees' employment with the company. This includes a periodic discussion of performance, sharing areas of improvements, and giving updates on future of business.

Some topics related to special conditions, circumstances, legal issues and feedback on performance are typically reserved to be discussed in counselling sessions.

Methods of Training

We all have the ability to learn. Somewhat with different levels of understanding, storing and applying the knowledge that has been acquired. Traditionally, we have been following a process of teaching in which everything is taught to you in theory, while you are expected to perform based on those. But, as the time changes, today's generation is adopting some entirely new ways of teaching-learning processes.

Gone are the days of long lectures and theory sessions. The best way to design a training module would be to first understand how we acquire knowledge. Scientifically done researches have shown that there are four stages of anyone's awareness about any particular knowledge or skill.

- Unconscious Incompetent
- Conscious Incompetent
- Conscious Competent
- Unconscious Competent

Theses stages of awareness exist in all of us differently for diverse skill sets. You may be finding yourself in an unconscious competence of a skill, while for another in the unconscious incompetence level.

You may come across many such situations during the career of being a manager. The most basic need of training is to develop the skills of the trainees and push them to higher levels of their awareness. But, before beginning, you must analyze the methods that can be adopted for training and also when and how to apply them.

Unconscious Incompetent

This stage is the primary stage when you can call a person ignorant. One doesn't know that a particular skill exists and is not in possession of that skill at all.

Take for example: "5 - 6 = -1" this statement is a false for a primary school student. Because they are not taught about it. Hence they cannot even perform these type of mathematical questions.

Conscious Incompetent

This stage is a notch higher from the last stage. One is not ignorant of any particular skill but, still, doesn't possess it. However, since the person knows the usefulness of that skill, he may seek for options to learn it and improve himself.

Conscious incompetent people know that acquiring one skill can help them overcome many hurdles and give them career growth. However, they still won't try to acquire it as they are happy in their current roles. Procrastination and laziness are the prime reasons behind being consciously incompetent.

Conscious Competent

When a person is not ignorant of any particular skill and also possess it, this stage is termed as being consciously competent. A person in this stage needs to understand the usefulness of the skill and must practice it to have mastered it fully.

Conscious competent people have a skill, but are happy to remain at amateur levels at it. They have to be motivated to teach them the value of their skillsets and taught to nurture their skills to bring profits for them and to the organization.

Unconscious Competent

This stage often exists in each one of us for some particular skills. One has this skill and has been using it since a long time, but doesn't recognize this to be a

useful skill. Once told, they can easily master this skill and use it when required. It needs a good teacher to take out what lies within you.

Unconscious competent people need to be given a real-world picture of the areas in which their skills have developed and where they are expected to perform. Once they realize that their skills can be used in a lucrative manner, they will start practicing it with regularity.

Styles of Learning

Multitasking is one of the key function of a human brain, which makes us greater than all other species. Due to the capacity of learning different things, it makes us remain in different stages of awareness for different types of skills. Based on these, the methods to train the individual candidate may be different. Therefore, nowadays, a learner-focused environment is of most importance. Just as there are multiple profiles of learners, there are multiple ways people learn as well.

Following are the five senses that a learner uses to learn anything –

- Auditory (To Hear)
- Kinesthetic (To Feel)
- Visual (To See)
- Olfactory (To take smell)
- Gustatory (To taste)

The first three senses are essential to account for training methods and have been being used primarily, while Olfactory and Gustatory are not related to our concerned topic.

To process an information and store it, one may like to hear it from someone or maybe experience the work by being a part of the working team or even watch the others work. Which method is suitable for which candidate is a matter of coincidence. Sometimes, a combination of these methods can also be useful.

Learn through Auditory Senses

The learner for whom hearing information is the most suited method to remember comes under this category. They will prefer to listen to a recorded subject rather than reading it. They remember the piece of information better when they hear it instead of reading it.

You will find such people more suitable for sales calls over the telephone because they are very attentive and receptive to voice fluctuations, and intonations.

Following are the methods one can adopt to train the auditory learners −

- Have regular conversations with the person.

- Provide frequent lectures/presentations.

- Make provisions for question & answer sessions or doubt clearing sessions.

- Open discussions should be done on a regular basis.

- Equip the person with recorded materials (Audio/Video).

Learn through Kinesthetic Senses

Those who prefer to work in actuality and experience, instead of only hearing, come under this category of learners. They are also called **physical learners** or **practical learners**. They learn through practical experience of the work, by feeling every bit of it, to be precise.

Those who learn through kinesthetic senses can even notice and learn facial expressions during a conversation. They can remember the locations once they are involved in it. They would prefer going on a site visit over listening or reading about it. They would prefer reading as a secondary approach after having a practical experience. They may attend lectures, but that will be of limited approach to them unless a practical or mock demonstration is included in it.

Following are the methods, one can adopt to train the kinesthetic learners −

- Ask them to make a demonstration
- Engage them into roll play
- Equip them with recorded videos
- Metaphors and mental paintings can be helpful

Learn through Visual Senses

The visual learners are those who learn things easily by watching. They are the ones who like reading books. They would prefer artistic representations such as paintings, drawings or music.

Those who learn through visual senses believe in what they have seen. A distraction of noise won't disturb them, but anything that blocks their sight will. There are some employees, who would ask you to give directions on paper by either drawing or writing. You can easily understand that they are the visual category ones.

Following are the methods one can adopt to train the Visual learners −

- Paper presentations or power point presentations.

- Animated video demonstrations

- Leaflets, charts, posters etc.

- Insist on them to take written notes while a lecture is being taken.

The idea is to ensure that the candidate receives what is being taught in whichever method he is suited for, to avail training for him in all the methods. Besides, one must keep looking for any other methods that can be applied based on any particular learning style possessed by him, which you can observe by the clues offered by him.

One more good idea is to ask the candidate himself, what are the methods he/she prefers to learn anything? We all have been getting trained throughout our life so far. Every individual knows whether he/she would prefer listening, reading, attending a seminar, working in a team or any other way to learn things. So, this can be a timesaving idea to ask him about it.

Now that you know what are the methods a learner may require to take in the skills, it is up to you how better you can utilize this knowledge and arrange sales training for your team.

Core Concepts of Reinforcement

In addition to the best-suited learning style, the next important aspect that may support and promote the training methods is **behavior**. A known Behaviorist, Mr. B.F. Skinner (1904-1990) - A pioneer in the subject of reinforcement has set some forms and theories, which are now-adays being used as the basis of work techniques.

There are two types of stimuli which affect behavior −

- **Reinforcer** − Any stimulus desired by a candidate in order to seek experience.

- **Aversive Stimulus** − Any stimulus not desired by a candidate in order to avoid.

Here, an important note must be taken that the same stimulus may be a reinforcement for a candidate, while it can be an aversive stimulus for the other. It is all dependent to the behavioral nature of the candidate.

An individual might like to be on a stage addressing a huge gathering (reinforcer), while another may find it embarrassing (aversive stimulus). Pairing of two different stimuli can change the behavior of the candidate from being a reinforcer to an aversive stimulus person or vice versa.

Example

"Very good! Akash! It is a good sales proposal, but why have you not completed the soft-copy of it yet?"

Here a praising stimulus is changed to a criticizing one by pairing. Being a manager, it is your duty to understand well, the behavior of your salesperson and make the necessary training arrangements to balance the negative ones with the positive ones.

Let us take a look at another instance – a sales person is presenting new products to a particular client, without doing prior analysis of the needs of the customer. This may get the customer irritated. In this situation, the manager must arrange training to teach the candidate how to ask and analyze the needs of a customer beforehand.

You may act as a reinforcement to your subordinate by getting personally involved in his work. Therefore, it is important to recognize on an individual basis, what is reinforcing and what is aversive for that individual. Attention must be focused on the individual's action or reaction to any outside influences that seem to be affecting them in a reinforcing or aversive manner.

Motivating Agents as Reinforcers

We all know that appraisal is a good motivator. Any **reinforcer** would lead to more frequent occurrences of the action, while any aversion would decrease the probability of an occurrence.

You should be looking for correct actions taken by your subordinate and then praise him. An open applaud would work well here. While praising, you must specifically recognize the behavior which is good and it must be described why it was correct. This will not only make them feel better about it, but they will also take it up as a challenge to keep being in that level.

Let us take an example of a sales person having excellent presentation skills. After a particular presentation, you observed his good skills, gave him a positive response, but for whatever may be the reason, you did not compliment him on any specific point of his skills.

Though the sales person will feel good on your positive response, but there may be probably a drop in his performance the next time, maybe because he feels that his presentation skills are either not important or not good.

Significance of Setting Goals

Goal setting is very important for the productivity of a person. It is one of the most important aspect, but then sadly, most of the people don't understand it properly. It is crucial for you to set goals in every single aspect of your life. These aspects may include financial development, physical development, personal development, relationship development or even spiritual development.

The great author, entrepreneur and professional speaker, **Mr. Brian Tracy**, once said that, less than 3% of individuals have clear, documented goals, and a strategy for getting there. You will always stay a step ahead of the pack, if you set your goals.

There are individuals who always tend to blame everything that goes wrong in their lives on something else or somebody else. They show themselves as if they are victims and they give away all their position and control.

Contrary to this, successful people stay dedicated to take responsibility for their lives, irrespective of the the unknown or uncontrollable instances. Always live the present – the past is unchangeable, and the future is the direct outcome of what you are doing in the present!

The Three P's - Positive, Personal & Possible

A huge step towards the achievement of your dreams is to set goals on a long-term basis. On the other hand, the achievement of short-term goals can sum up to accomplish your objectives that you need to achieve in the long term.

It is very crucial to ensure that all the objectives you set uncover the power of these three P's –

- Positive
- Personal
- Possible

In this chapter, we will discuss these three P's in detail.

Positive

Who can most possibly be interested about a goal such as "Find a career that you think is interesting"? You should always note down your goals in a positive manner. This is because they help you by giving you a good feeling about yourself and the objective you wish to accomplish.

A better alternative approach may be: "Join the elementary law classes, so that I might, someday be able to help in solving legal problems faced by people.

Personal

Goals should be kept personal. They must be focused on your own desires and ethics. On the other hand, they should never include your friends, family or anybody else. When creating the statement of your goal, always use the letter "I" in the statement to label it to be yours.

If you have set personal goals, you'll be very ambitious to achieve success and will be proud of your achievements. It acts as a great motivator to try and out-reach your targets.

Possible

At the time to set goals, ensure that you analyse the possibilities and the extent of your control. Enrolling into an Ivy League University may be possible, if your grades are good. However, it wold be impossible, if you are struggling with grades.

In case of the latter, a more justified goal might be to enrol into a university or business school that covers studies in context of your chosen career. You may also prefer pursuing volunteer jobs that would make your college applications stronger.

The achievement challenging goals need a great deal of mental energy. Rather than dispersing your concentration by focusing on numerous goals at once, it is wise to put your mental focus on the single goal, that is currently the most crucial.

Business Sales Training - RACI Chart

While prioritizing your goals, go for a goal that will have the most influence on your life and then compare it with the time needed to achieve it. A major part of goal setting is not just finding out your desires, but also to realize the things you must give up in your life, so that you can get it. Most of the individuals do not wish to make a conscious decision to give up various aspects of their life that are needed to achieve goals.

Implementing a RACI Chart

A RACI chart is one of the best ways for sketching who is answerable for what during a job or task. To begin with, make a chart that includes various tasks listed on the left side and the associated resources listed across the top. Now, put the specific letter within each cell –

- **R** – Responsible for execution

- **A** – Approver

- **C** – Consult

- **I** – Keep Informed

Example

Responsibilities	Bob	Joe	Jane	Sue
Contacting prospects and mailing them	R	I	I	A
Closing the Sales and following up	A	C	I	R
Providing after-sales Customer Care	I	I	R	I

Inference

With changes in responsibility and the personal growth that we achieve, our goals also need to change. Sales Training helps us in reaching the goals, while sharing knowledge and reasons behind past achievements.

Sales training helps salespeople understand the achievements of the company. These achievements include different accomplishments of people in different departments, the various approaches that one can follow to get sales processed, and the future steps one is supposed to take once he understands the necessities of the organization.

Sales training makes you aware of the new trends and ideas surrounding you. It helps you to be equipped with the latest tools that you need to have for an effective sales pitch.