

Real Sales Training and the Science—Not Magic—Behind It

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Oh great, another expert talking about sales training.” Or, “What are his magic steps to a sale?” Well, if you got past the headline, I’ve got news for you. There is no secret sauce. No heroic “Glengarry Glen Ross” (Gen X’ers and Boomers) or “Wolf of Wall Street” (Millennials) story to inspire or scare you to death.

Sales Training 101 isn’t a thing. In fact, the majority of sales training in the tire industry isn’t sales training. It’s product training. Teaching someone (or better yet and more clearly someone learning) about a product is vastly different than sales training.

There are no magic steps. So let’s look at the science and practicality of what sales training is and isn’t.

What it is

Sales training should be about skill development: primarily active listening and converting that into solutions. There may be some necessary knowledge transfer, like learning some terminology or memorizing definitions. But the majority of sales training should be rooted in skill development.

Overcoming objections, the art of deep probing, or observing customer behavior to organize the sales process are the skills needed. And the best way to learn skills is through practice, not lecture.

Too many programs today are at some hotel, where the participants pay money to listen to someone talk about how the speaker did this and mastered that and all you need to do is “Always... Be... Closing.”

Instead, Just... Get... Out. Any method based on one person’s history (hero syndrome) is called “style,” and you can’t teach style and you can’t learn techniques by sitting there just listening. I remember a guy I used to work with, and when selling air filters, he would tap the dirty one out on the counter and say, “This is pretty dirty. You should replace it.” And if customers said no, he would scoop the dirt back into the air filter. When the customer objected, he would

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start laughing, they would then both laugh, and after a few sentences about “I thought you were OK with the dirt in there,” he would get them to buy the filter. If I did that, I would get punched in the face. That’s what style is. It’s unique; it’s personality, and it’s unteachable and almost un-learnable.



Sales training needs to be based on proven scientific research that supports trainable techniques — actions that can be repeated, and have layers of depth of understanding. You need a new sales person to be

able to go through the motions and learn the basics, and an expert who can layer his or her style on top of the technique and make it nearly flawless.

At a recent training event, a tire dealer from California had this to say: “At first, I hated the idea of having to record myself. But when I realized how much it helped me improve, I went back to the shop and we have sales role plays once a quarter in meetings.”

What it does

Repetition, repetition, repetition. Every year, football coaches start training camp with guys who make millions of dollars a year and get them back in the weight room and practicing drills on blocking, tackling and running routes. The basics. A guy could be in the league for 15 years, and he still is required to practice.

Sales training starts in a workshop where the techniques are practiced (hopefully on camera in small group role play, and then critiqued). But how often is the method repeated back at work? Anyone who takes CPR knows you need to go back and prove you still know how to do it every couple of years. Sales training is as much a part of attending a workshop as it is a culture of the business.

How it helps

If you are an owner, you have a brand that is very personal to you. It is you. And when things go wrong and customers get upset, it is infuriating that your brand is damaged.

Effective sales training shows employees “the way” you want them to present vehicle conditions to a customer. It creates order and process in an environment where customers are generally suspicious.

When salespeople “do it their way,” it is very difficult to manage how your brand is represented. Buyer’s remorse. Bad customer reviews on Yelp. Bad word of mouth. With proper sales training and regular practice, most of these issues can be avoided or seriously reduced.

Net gain

For sales training to be effective, it needs to be developed in a workshop (or revisited) and then encouraged and enforced at the store. Net gain is a term used in some excellent selling seminars to describe how a customer is better off using your products and services over a competitor, without bashing the competition’s product. The net gain of your employees attending good sales training should be immediate use of the techniques, and it should pay for itself in increased sales in just a few short months.

With regular “practices” and increased skill development, employee morale and confidence will increase, and a more professional sales presentation to customers will reduce customer suspicions.

The net gain for your store or company is that sales training should be transformative.

At DSP (Dealer Strategic Planning), we offer a three-day sales and coaching workshop several times a year called Dimensions, where the majority of work is done in small room breakout sessions. Selling scenarios are acted out using real life situations (upset customers, quiet customers and more).

We take the psychology of a sale and break it down to find out how a customer’s behavior works and how that should signal what the salesperson should say and do at any point in the conversation. We also show how these skills translate to

employee conversations as well. And we practice, practice and practice those skills.

Here are two quotes from owners who attended or sent someone to a recent sales training workshop:

“I have been to the Dimensions sales training classes twice. There is just so much to draw from: dealing with customers, to dealing with employees, to dealing with your wife and kids. Hey, selling isn’t just to customers! My sales teams for both my organizations have been able to apply some of the basics I have taken back and taught them. I have seen Dennis in many situations outside of Dimensions training in our DSP 20 Group apply the principles of the training, which just re-enforces that he knows, and practices what he preaches.” — Shop owner in Texas

“It will change your life. I thought I would go and learn some things or clean up my presentation, but the concepts learned here will honestly change how you communicate with everyone in your life. I came back from the class ready to fire a technician, and we had a conversation for an hour that never would have happened before, only because I asked the right questions and let him talk. I do this with customers now, and sales have never been better. — Shop owner in Louisiana

A big segment of the workshop is also about developing an understanding of human behavior and how to move people through behavior stages to one that supports a positive buying experience. There is no special sauce. No magic. Just hard work and results that are proven in science and statements from previous attendees.

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