

Winning Professional Development for the Sales Professional: The Six Core Disciplines

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More than 12 million people work in sales or sales-related management in the U.S. Although sales is the economy's single largest profession, most of its experts are under-trained. Therefore, as much as 90% of the profession isn't prepared for the highest levels of achievement.

Proper training is critical not only to the individual sales professional but also to the employer. It equips personnel with the skills necessary to represent their organizations in the most professional manner and achieve higher levels of performance faster. It also lowers turnover.

To development their salespeople, it's important that organizations implement plans that may include six core career-based training disciplines:

Product Training

Sales professionals should have expertise in the features, functions and applications of their companies' products and capabilities. They should learn costs, pricing and, perhaps, profit issues. Also, order writing, tracking and implementation procedure.

Tactical Sales Skills Training

Tactical sales skills training develops competence in the management of the sales process. Sales professionals should learn to identify and approach contacts in their respective markets, create interest and uncover opportunity, move the sales process along, and, when necessary, terminate it. They should learn to open and close sales calls, identify and explore decision-making processes, and present recommendations and solutions.

Strategic Sales Skills Training

The purpose of strategic sales skills training is to develop the expertise necessary to effectively penetrate a targeted market. This includes training in market research and sales opportunity development, competitive analysis, market/account positioning strategy, sales plan development and account management.

People Management and Interpersonal Skills Training

Sales professionals should develop competence in establishing and maintaining enduring working relationships with a variety of personalities. It's important to learn how to profile people and determine what actions and methods to use when dealing with different personality types. Additionally, they'll learn relationship-based communications and problem solving skills.

Business Acumen Training

Business acumen training helps to develop an understanding of clients' organizations, and other organizations for the benefit of clients. Sales professionals need to develop expertise in analyzing financial statements, business structures, operational capabilities, business strategies and marketing disciplines.

Project Management Training

Project management training helps to develop competence in managing "big ticket" items and sophisticated sales order handling. With this type of training, sales professionals develop expertise in order entry, tracking, implementation and ongoing post-implementation support procedure.

Depending on the industry, it may not be necessary for salespeople to undergo training in all six disciplines. Rather, sales professionals should be exposed to each discipline based on the products/services they sell, clients they sell to and extent of their selling and supporting responsibilities.

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