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Ensuring a Return on Investment on your Sales Training

Successful sales team leaders recognize that an ongoing training program is a key element in developing the skills of their sales team, as well as ensuring they stay sharp and at the top of their game.

However, sales training is a significant investment when one considers not only the cost of the training, but also the opportunity cost of taking them off the road for several days to attend the training. Like any investment, you want to ensure that your organization generates a significant return on that investment (ROI).

The first step to ensuring a ROI is to understand your baseline, the level of performance that you are starting with. From a quantitative perspective this can involve understanding the key sales metrics for your organization, such as number of proposals, dollar value of proposals and the closing ratio. Add a qualitative perspective to this through ride-alongs and observing the sales team in action. A well structured observation form will also provide significant information about their performance baseline. This information can then be compared to post training sales metrics and ride-along observations to quantify and qualify the improvement.

It is also important to ensure that the sales team is committed to learning the material and developing an action plan to implement their newfound knowledge and skills. It is important that they see the sales leadership team is actively involved in the process. As well, the course structure needs to reflect the way adults learn and should include some lecture, but also a significant amount of group work, case study and discussion to understand how the key concepts apply in their real world environment.

Another way to ensure the sales team is committed to learning and applying the material is to test and certify the team post training. This is a process offered by the Canadian Professional Sales Association (CPSA), through their Certified Sales Professional (CSP) designation. Participants that complete the CPSA Professional Selling training program can undertake an exam process that includes both written and verbal components, including a role play. The net result of the study required to pass this exam is that the participants have truly embedded the processes and skills taught, and are able to translate those new talents into better sales results. In fact, research shows that 86% of CSP's feel they now have a competitive advantage in selling and almost two-thirds increased their sales by 15% or more. And after all, are not increased sales what a measurable ROI for sales training is all about?

Michelle Cain, CSP is a partner in Cain Sales Solutions and a licensed distributor for the Canadian Professional Sales Association. Additional information is available at www.cainsalesolutions.com