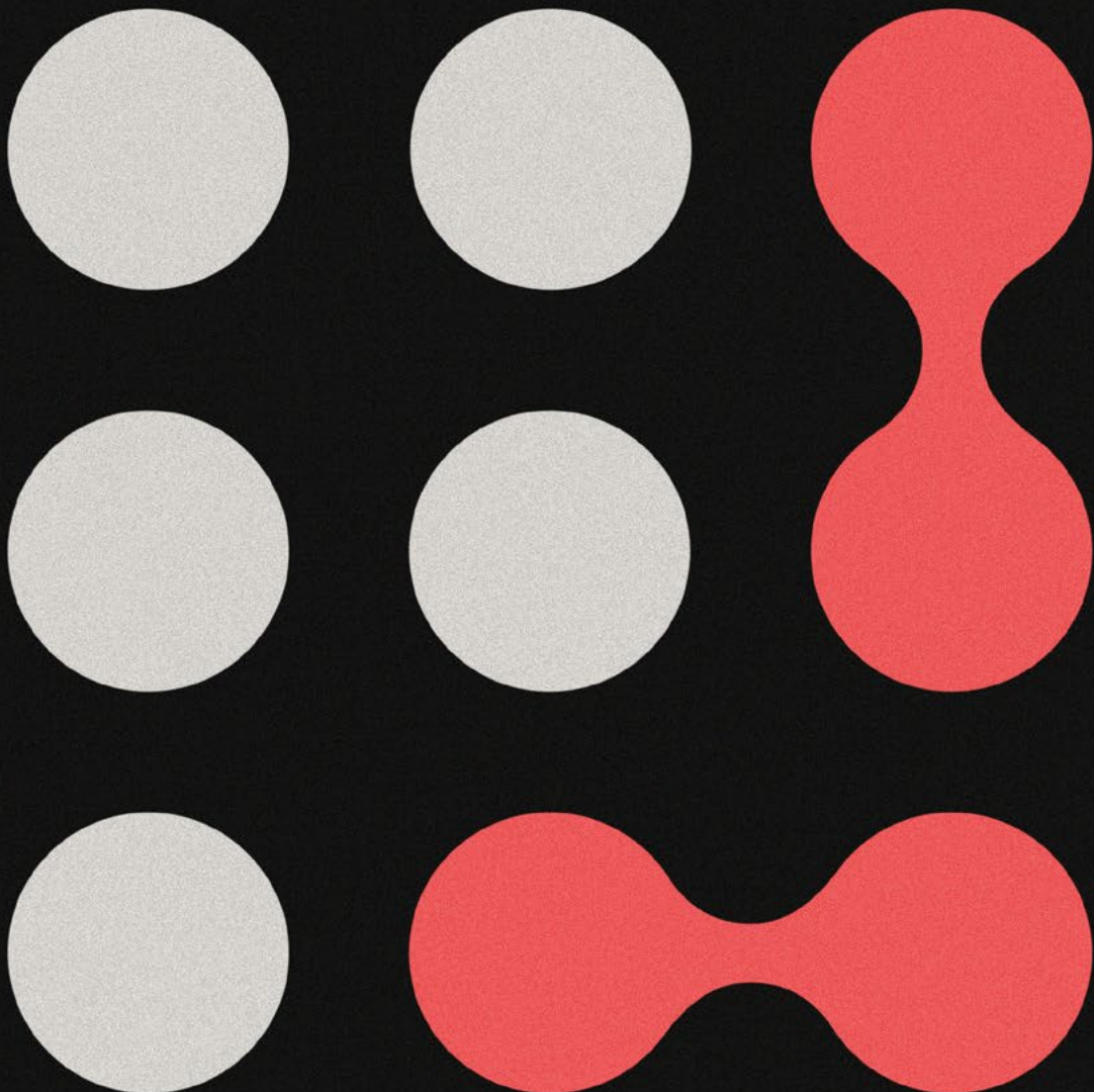




Making learning stick

Discover the practical and cost-effective ideas L&D professionals leverage to support and drive the application of their training initiatives.



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The real value of training lies in the ability to embed new knowledge and skills in the day-to-day behaviours of employees."

For many, the build-up to a training event is usually the most exciting part of the learning process. If done right, your team will be filled with excitement and enthusiasm that comes with learning something new. But how do you nurture that enthusiasm in the long term?

The real value of training lies in the ability to embed new knowledge and skills in the day-to-day behaviours of employees. Training shouldn't be seen as a one-time event, but a continuous process that supports the change of behaviour over time. Embedding new training is important, because it ensures that the knowledge and skills acquired are applied consistently and effectively. The outcome of this is improved overall performance, productivity, and more job satisfaction for those involved.

But what do you actually need to do to encourage this long-term behaviour change so that employees continue to apply their new skills and behaviours within their role?

In this document, we'll talk you through some practical, engaging and cost-effective ideas to support and drive the application of what's been learned, including:

- How to effectively launch the programme and how to encourage engagement
- How to track engagement and progress throughout the learning programme
- How best to support action planning and transfer of new skills and behaviours in the workplace
- How to embed new sales skills and behaviours into employees' existing role and responsibilities without disruption.

Plan – guidance on your sales training programme launch and encouraging engagement

When you've decided to implement sales skills development within your organisation, there are a few things you can do to encourage your employees to engage with the material before the training even begins.

Here are a few ideas of things to implement before the programme begins:

- Senior sales leaders running a virtual kick-off session for each cohort
- Preparing participants with basic knowledge of the training so they can begin to implement this in team meetings
- Countdown clocks on intranet pages used frequently by programme participants, and videos from the senior team distributed to all participants.

To ensure a common understanding of the sales training they'll be undertaking, and the alignment between the organisation's strategy and the new skills they'll be learning, we also recommend key actions that will pave the way for real behaviour change.

Organising a 'top team' event

Many organisations work hard to ensure that leaders understand how they can support and encourage behaviour change. Create a concise programme to share how senior leaders can positively influence the success of an implementation. This event will provide an overview of the proposed skills development programme and how the top team can support the project to ensure it's received well, and behaviour change is sustained long-term. The top team will gain a shared understanding:

- of the overall implementation
- of the skills development and tools, and how participants will use them in the workplace
- of the potential blocks to progress and how to avoid them
- of how senior leaders can demonstrate their support.

Win hearts and minds – build a motivational agenda that will put your sales team on the path to sales success

Sales leaders have real power to strengthen the impact of sales skills development with the right messages and encouragement. Full leadership support will ensure these activities maximise your training investment, inspire sellers to meet organisational goals and encourage teams to leverage the peer-to-peer and expert connections available to them.

Engaging with teams should start well ahead of any kind of learning kick-off event. Pre-event activities and communications are a great way to spark curiosity and excitement. So, you could think about the following:

- **Consider creating a kick-off video for managers** – a video direct from your CEO or senior leader can help to prioritise the learning events and really set expectations for the whole organisation.
- **Show people you care about them and their goals** – promote how the learning can positively impact future career goals. Some people will need to understand and align with the bigger picture to stay focused. If you have defined career/promotion paths, completing the sales training and implementing the key behaviours back in the workplace can be integrated into those pathways.
- **Show them positive testimonials from previously trained participants** – often, members of your team may not even think they need help until they receive it, which may negatively impact their attitude towards the training. The best examples will be from other people who have undertaken the training, including anyone in your organisation who has been through it already. If there isn't anyone in-house that has been through the training yet, reach out to the training provider to get some first-hand reviews of the training from the people who have.

Monitor – how to keep track of engagement and progress during the sales training programme

Prepare managers for success – time invested in preparing for the training ensures sales managers understand the importance of learning new skills and how changing behaviours will benefit the whole organisation. It's important that they can answer questions about the sales training programme and ways in which they can support their teams. At the very least, ensure they know:

- The training schedule and programme timings
- The materials required and how they are to be used
- All information regarding logistics and classroom set up
- How they can support with examples and client stories.

Monitor participants' use of the learning management system

Many companies want to ensure that the investment the organisation is making is being maximised.

At a basic level, it is usual for line managers or a member of the project team to be given access to the learning resources, agenda and any learning management systems. This allows them to more clearly understand the training programme, the tasks expected of each participant, and to check participants' learning.

This way, managers and/or the project team can spot individuals who are finding fitting the learning into their working day difficult and can offer support. They can also identify those who have not engaged and speak to them to understand why.

Measurement and rewards – we have found that the saying 'what gets measured gets done and what gets rewarded gets done first' is true for companies who encourage a work/reward approach. While long-term goals and personal payoffs are great motivators, some people may need something a bit more immediate. This could be simply asking 'how are you getting on?' or a more formal recognition of progress, such as prizes or bonuses for full involvement in the training.

These more formal awards could be turned into a celebration, where certificates are awarded, special prizes are given out for standout contributions and where true behaviour change is recognised and rewarded.



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Support – how best to support action planning and transfer of new skills and behaviours into the workplace

Having invested in the skills and behaviours of your team, you'll want to see the learning implemented in the workplace.

While many individuals are enthusiastic about applying what they have learned, others will need more structure and encouragement. The best way to achieve this – and the gold standard for supporting transfer of learning to the workplace – is if sales managers can act as coaches.

Offer actionable, objective insight through coaching

Coaching offers the greatest potential to increase performance at a lower cost than almost any other initiative an organisation can take. Some ideas listed below will help any organisation to set up a coaching project with the best possible chance of producing real and lasting performance change.

- **Enlist visible support from your Senior Leadership Team** – having the full backing of senior managers can help to set expectations that coaching is a priority activity, which needs to become a normal part of performance development. After a blaze of support in the beginning, it's all too easy for coaching to slip down the priority list when there are other pressing demands on time. Senior manager attention on a regular basis is one of the most effective ways of ensuring coaching is seen as a priority.
- **Focus on action and ideas** – our research has found that the most effective coaching sessions contain more suggestions for action, and that the majority of these come from the coachee. This means that there is less information exchange and less feedback. Good coaches make an effort to encourage coachees to come up with their own ideas.

- **Make sure sales coaches have the right skills** – not all managers have the skills needed to coach their people. While some may not admit it, the fear of being exposed is one of the factors that produces resistance to coaching. The lack of coaching skills can also be the cause of resistance from team members if they find the coaching experience less than helpful. Ensuring the coaches receive training to develop their coaching skills can markedly improve success. It's equally important that the coaches have a good grasp of the skills they are trying to coach.
- **Focus on a few areas at a time** – trying to change too many things at once rarely produces a good result, so work on one thing until change is established before you move on to the next. Look for the areas of development that are likely to bring the biggest returns for the time invested, or focus on the areas of most importance to the business. Remember that even one area of improvement can make a real difference to performance, so be patient.
- **Don't stop once you have started** – all the evidence shows that failing to continue with coaching once expectations have been raised is worse than not starting at all. It can have a negative impact on both the morale of the person being coached and their relationship with their manager. Worse, there is a risk that performance will actually fall, as the person being coached strives to apply half-learned skills.

Embed – how to embed new sales skills and behaviours while maintaining ‘business as usual’ within your customer-facing teams

Beyond the initial sales training programme and skills development, there is much the organisation can do to ensure that the new sales skills and behaviours continue to be applied day to day in meetings with customers and prospects.

- **Living the new behaviours** – Despite the enormous amount of work that goes into organising and optimising the time spent on learning events and ensuring information is delivered in the most effective ways possible, you can’t get away from the fact that there is a great deal of new information for participants to take onboard. Anything sales leaders can do to ensure the learning is delivered and supported in ALL communication and workflow channels will be of huge benefit.

For example, consider all the ways you can bring the learning into your world, day to day. Think about how you can:

- Support the new sales skills and give encouragement through communication channels, such as Microsoft Teams
- Ensure the learning tools are available in your CRM and encourage their regular use
- Bring new sales language into sales meetings, reporting, KPI’s, etc.

- **Connect with peers** – Connecting sellers with their peers (maybe in other sales or sales-related teams) can create beneficial ‘cross-pollination’ of ideas, best practice, and can help organisations promote collective knowledge that will last long after the learning programme has been completed. Offering other teams who are part of the customer journey an understanding of the sales training skills, e.g. Marketing, Project Management and Sales Engineers, may be a way of helping the sales training become a fully embedded methodology throughout the whole sales function.

- **Provide opportunities for practice** – Within sales meetings or events, integrate salespeople of various tenures, roles and locations, if possible, and continue role-plays using the sales skills they’ve learned. Veteran sellers will be able to share some best practice, and less-experienced sellers can learn from them AND share some unconventional strategies or questions that may challenge tried-and-tested approaches.

- **Support your team on real-world sales calls** – Listen to how salespeople are communicating with their customers and notice how customers are reacting throughout the sales cycle – are there areas of the sales training being used well that you can highlight to others, so it resonates in your particular business world? Or are there areas that need more focus, where some salespeople may benefit from a refresher course?

Once these sales skills are being applied in real sales conversations, celebrate the successes. As we’ve already outlined that ‘what gets measured gets done and what gets rewarded gets done first’.

Additional reading – blogs, whitepapers and reports you can share with your managers and teams

Case Studies

Find out how [Sopra Steria](#) chose the right sales methodology, challenged their consultants and ensured that new behaviours were sustained.

Blogs

[In sales conversations, it turns out it's quality and quantity](#)

[End of cycle sales killer: 3 sales mistakes to avoid in your next sales conversation](#)

[Buyer's risk: signs you won't close the deal](#)

[Sales coaching – the key to lasting performance improvement](#)

[Four questions buyers ask themselves and how sellers can address them](#)

[Learning Culture - a time to take stock](#)

[Is aligning sales and service teams key to securing deals?](#)

[Sales people are the crucial differentiator in competitive markets](#)

Whitepapers

[Developing sales effectiveness](#)

[Concerns - the end of cycle sales killer](#)

[How to create and capture value](#)

[Developing profitable client relationships](#)

[Proposals - the silent sales killer](#)

[Remote selling - behavioural tips and advice](#)



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