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How to Get Your Sales Reps to Remember Their Sales Training

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When you look at your sales force, you're probably noticing that more senior and veteran sales reps are approaching retirement age within the next decade. In fact, you might already be welcoming younger reps into the fold to fill the gaps left by those who have retired. While Millennials can bring fresh perspectives and enthusiasm, the loss of your veteran reps means that you're also losing their knowledge and experience. The newer reps will have to be trained and coached, and this requires consistency in materials and messaging.

A traditional approach to getting your sales team – veterans and rookies alike – on the same page and present the goals and messaging for the year ahead is to host an annual sales kickoff event. We've all attended them. Some of us have likely even organized and executed them. But have you ever felt that maybe, just maybe, it wasn't as effective as it should have been? Ever suspected that when all those salespeople leave the venue and get on their flights home, they probably don't remember much of what was presented? If so, you're probably onto something. Research has shown that within 90 days of the completion of a training event, like a sales kickoff meeting, attendees forget more than 80 percent of the information they learned.

"But wait," you think. "My sales kickoff might be a point-in-time event, but we provide lots of great documentation for reps of all experience levels. We created these resources so our reps can access what they need to learn, year-round."

That's great! The problem, though, is that your sales reps (no matter how much experience they have) might only go looking for that content when there's a deal on the table, often at the last minute. They might not know how to find it. They might not know it exists. They just might not feel like going and reading it.

Erin Provey, Service Director of Strategic Communications Management at analyst firm SiriusDecisions notes, "Sixty to seventy percent of content in b-to-b organizations goes unused. The number-one reason? Irrelevance. The number-two and number-three reasons? People don't know it exists or can't find it."

So the question then becomes, how can companies consistently engage their sales reps with content they'll actually consume and use in the field, both to train greener team members and ensure consistency in messaging with more experienced reps?

Microlearning is one approach to solving this problem, and the mobile device you're probably holding in your hand is the ideal platform for it. Microlearning is all about consuming content in small bites, and business professionals already exhibit this behavior for many daily tasks. If you want to know how to tie a necktie, cook a steak, or solve a

Rubik's Cube, you can find countless tutorials and videos online that will show you how to properly do all those things. When applied to the sales training process, microlearning provides an avenue for long-term reinforcement of the strategies and messaging shared in a sales kickoff event. Going beyond sales kickoffs, microlearning using mobile video helps veteran sales reps share best practices, lessons learned, techniques, and tips with their colleagues.

Picture this scenario: One of your longstanding A+ sales reps navigates a tricky pitch with lots of questions around compliance regulations. She nails every answer, puts her prospect's mind at ease, and closes the sale right there in the room. Knowing that her colleagues might get the same set of objections, she shoots a two-minute smartphone video in her car just ten minutes after the meeting. With this material fresh in her mind, she outlines how she answered those questions and distributes it to her entire team. Her teammates watch the video, jot down some notes, and are much better prepared to handle the same objections. They didn't have to go hunting for a deck from the kickoff, or for a PDF on SharePoint. They learned quickly and efficiently by watching a short video prepared by one of their peers in the field.

The same goes for those times you find yourself dozing off during a five-day national sales conference. The information you're receiving might be useful, but it can be difficult to recall what you learned at a later date. Making materials easily available for reference post-event will help attendees better retain what they learned and give them the opportunity to share helpful tips and tricks with other sales reps on your team. With the swipe of a finger, sales reps can find inspiration from an awesome presentation they viewed a week ago and use it to produce a killer sales pitch.

Video-based microlearning can also be used as an effective way to onboard new sales reps. A sales team is a wealth of knowledge and best practices, and often those useful tips aren't shared throughout the team. Sharing videos from more seasoned reps utilizing tips they picked up over the years can help to get the newer reps up to speed and out in the field quicker than the average. Not to mention, the more prepared each rep is, the higher your sales quota will be!

Of course, for microlearning to be successful, the information needs to be easily accessible from anywhere, since sales professionals are always on the move. Modern mobile-video sales-learning platforms allow companies to organize content in dedicated channels for easy access on mobile devices and tablets. Finding your next great sales pitch should be as easy as opening an app.

However, while mobile just-in-time microlearning helps with message absorption, consistency, and collaboration, the additional benefit is that reps aren't relying solely on their knowledge of a product to close sales. They need to understand the trends impacting their buyers' industries, and other important factors such as regulatory issues, competitive pressures, partnerships, and more to be able to strengthen their sales approach.

Buyers are also smarter and better informed than ever before — after all, they have access to the same internet as the rest of us, and good reps must assume that their prospects have done their homework. Microlearning will help reps better prepare for the questions and concerns they'll encounter about the product itself, and raise their games to become trusted advisors for their prospects, helping to guide them through the ups and downs of their evolving industry. After all, that's why they called you.

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