

# Selling Power®

SOLUTIONS FOR SALES MANAGEMENT  
Special Edition February 2023 • SellingPower.com

## Sales Success in a Turbulent World

*Building Resilience to Empower Sellers and Drive Growth in Uncertain Times*



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

**allego** 

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## ABOUT ALLEGRO

Allego's complete sales enablement platform is a market leader approaching 1 million users across deployments in one quarter of Dow Jones Industrial Average companies, 5 of the 10 largest U.S. banks, 3 of the 5 largest U.S. insurance companies, 4 of the 5 largest global medical device companies, and many other global enterprises. Learn more about sales enablement that wins sellers and buyers at Allego.com.

# INTRODUCTION

## Dear Reader,

Why did we create this issue about success in a turbulent world?

Because B2B companies in every industry face turbulence. Economic headwinds are stirring doubt about the future. Budgets are being level-set or cut. Purchasing decisions are delayed. B2B buyers have new expectations. Hybrid sales teams struggle to master new ways of selling.

No doubt all these factors will make 2023 challenging. But despite these uncertainties, sales leaders still have one thing in mind: growth.

This focused issue will guide you with six key strategies for profitability. You will:

1. Get best-in-class strategies for sales leaders in a downturn.
2. Understand how to future-proof your sales force and transform results in 2023.
3. Learn three ways to create resilience, build seller capabilities, and drive growth.
4. Leverage a scalable framework for giving sellers the tailored coaching they need.
5. See how the benefits of continuous learning can have an exponential impact on your business.
6. Be able to optimize tools, resources, and content for the greatest efficiency.

You may need to reset priorities and change selling behaviors that will ensure profitable growth. Preparing for change of this magnitude begins with your mindset—your mental habits, ability to appraise reality objectively, and think about your situation creatively.

Over a decade ago, we collaborated with the University of Massachusetts at Amherst to uncover the differences between average achievers (earning \$100K a year) and very high achievers (earning over \$1 million a year).

We found that very high achievers adopted a different thinking style to deal with their personal, social, and business challenges. As a result, they made more money, were more satisfied with their social lives, and felt happier about themselves and their achievements.

Based on the research, we gained a clearer understanding of what success is all about. It boils down to the right mindset, the best skills set and the most useful tool set.

When things go wrong, how does your mind respond? What thoughts do you create in moments of difficulty? Do you resort to blame (self or others)? Do you see your challenges as a burden or as an opportunity?

Earl Nightingale once said that the strangest secret is that we become what we think about. He discovered that successful people were able to see their goals clearly and they never lost their focus. They never lost their will to win, no matter what obstacle stood in the way.

If success is the result of thinking, what do your own thoughts tell you about success?

We hope you enjoy this special issue of Selling Power magazine and that it guides you to a successful 2023. We encourage you to share it with your entire sales team.



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# What Lies Ahead *for* Sales

BY MARGARET LITTMAN, SELLING POWER

How to prep your sales organization for success in an uncertain economy



## The thing about an uncertain economy is that it is ... uncertain. No one knows what's going to happen.

J.P. Morgan reports global GDP will increase by just 1.5% in 2023 and the U.S. GDP by 1%. Bloomberg predicts a U.S. recession, with continued inflation and higher interest rates. The Deloitte forecast shows very slow growth in the first half of 2023 but not a recession. And some investors are bullish.

Long story, short, we don't know what's around the bend. And, that makes it hard to plan. Sometimes it feels like packing for a vacation without knowing your destination. Should you toss the ski gloves and goggles into the suitcase? Or the sunscreen and swimsuit?

Of course, there have been downturns before. But we haven't come out of a global pandemic in the modern age. Certainly not while facing climate change, a war, and supply chain pressure. Remote workers feel disconnected from their teams and insecure about their jobs.

Many of today's salespeople weren't in the workforce during the last downturn. Think about it: Today's 30-year-olds were in middle school during the 2007-2009 Great Recession. So, while downturns might not be new, they're new to them.

As you look at your sales organization, you need to evaluate how to prepare for any possibility. There's probably not room for both the ski equipment and the beach gear.

## SO, WHAT'S AN ORGANIZATION TO DO?

The good news is that there are steps you can take. As 2023 rears its uncertain head, being fiscally conservative is likely going to be required, but to do so as a knee-jerk reaction is not the answer. Being intentional can make the difference between an organization in chaos and one leading through innovation.

In uncertain times, organizations are facing two mandates that, on their face, seem contradictory: reduce spending and increase productivity. In fact, those goals can complement each other, if you think about them as motivation to invest in your sales team and create agile, well-trained sellers, armed with the right tools, who can sell efficiently regardless of market forces.

Forward-thinking organizations will connect key sales capabilities—onboarding and training; content and messaging; coaching and collaboration; product launches and rollouts, and virtual selling—to build the sales force of the future.

## BE RESILIENT

When the ground beneath you is unstable, the key to survival is the ability to move quickly to safer footing. When McKinsey investigated the relationship between companies' organizational health and their financial performance during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, it found that those with resilient behaviors were more likely to stay solvent than those that did not. Resilient companies bounce forward, innovating through change, rather than bouncing back after adversity.

"In fact, organizations can grow through downturns," explains Mark Magnacca, president and co-founder of Allego. "Companies that harness intentional corporate resilience are those that will thrive while others will flounder in uncertainty."

Easier said than done, of course. So, what counts as resilient behaviors? Empowering knowledge sharing, conducting continual training and upskilling, and fostering bottom-up innovation, among others. A resilient workplace is one that is populated by people who are adaptable and flexible.

## START WITH STRATEGY

To make resilience a reality, take a step back and look at the big picture. All the detailed tactics in the world won't help if you don't have clear goals and a game plan for what you want from your sales force and your team, says Mike Kunkle, Vice President, Sales Effectiveness Services, SPARXiQ and author of *The Building Blocks of Sales Enablement*.

His approach to building blocks uses corporate strategy as a foundation and then layers on the tools and techniques to achieve company goals. Examining budgets, desired outcomes, market forces, metrics and external pressures can help you figure out what you want your future sales organization to look like and how to build it.

If you start with reactionary actions—such as

hiring freezes and layoffs, for example—you may, in fact, reduce expenses. But you won't know if that is really what you need until you look at the big picture. As you evaluate your mission and your strategy, remember that your goals are to establish processes and consistency with flexibility, given the world we live in.

## SHIFT YOUR MINDSET

Once you're there, you can get granular. This is the time to reevaluate your processes and your staff.

Look at the ways in which your team approaches prospective customers. Today's purchasing groups are larger than ever. Sellers must engage more stakeholders and these buyers are not necessarily professional procurement leaders or decision-makers. Their process is not always clearly defined or linear. And, they have their own uncertainty and economic pressures to face.

It makes sense to encourage your salespeople to embrace a mind shift. They are helping customers solve problems—including some of that uncertainty. As they position themselves as partners, prospective customers will appreciate the solutions they provide.

Sellers can gain the agility they need to face the unknown with training on-demand and information available in the flow of work, supported by a modern sales enablement tech stack. Forget the days of product information only being available during a training session.

They need to be able access those materials on-the-go from their mobile devices, 24-7.

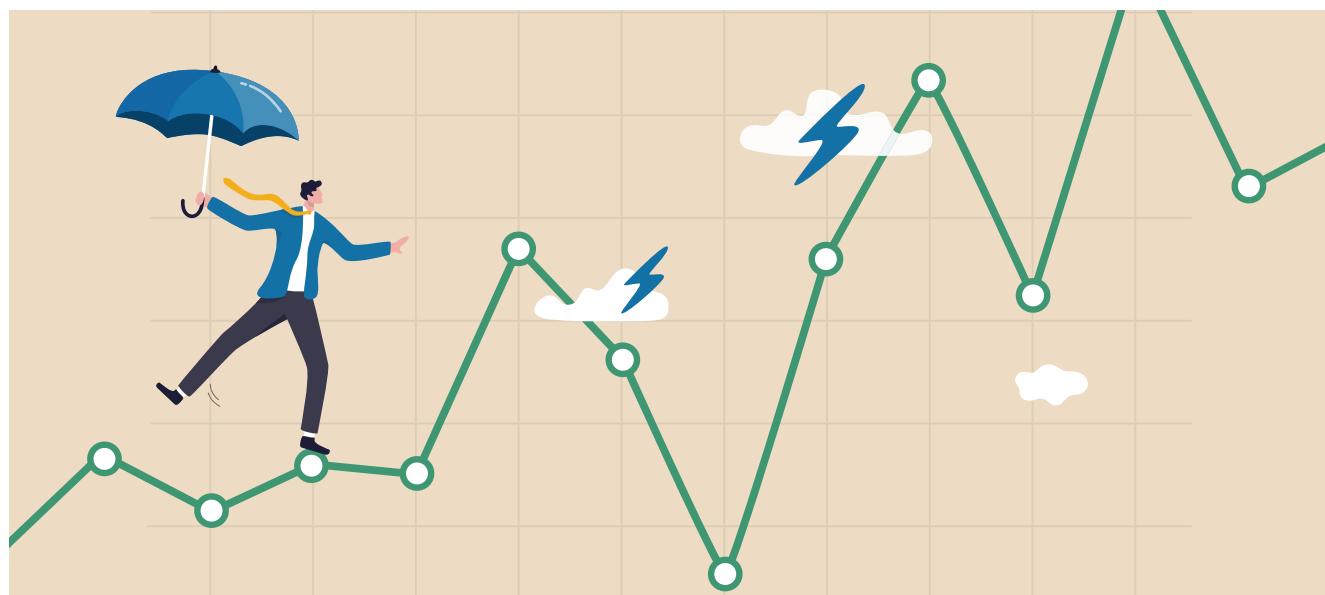
The right sales-training program positions sellers to be successful with today's B2B buyers who spend more time doing their own research and less time engaging with a sales team. Buyers can search and download PDFs from the Internet on their own, so sellers need to be armed with agile content, enabling them to anticipate and meet buyers' immediate needs.

Sales and marketing teams must work together to develop and distribute this agile content. If marketing doesn't create collateral that fills the sales force's needs, sellers will use time and resources to make their own. In the article on Getting Sellers Engaged, reps report that they are significantly more likely to use collateral when they learn about it from a high-performing peer, as opposed to a sales leader or marketer.

## DON'T STOP

No matter what 2023 brings our way, the expertise in the following pages will help you pack your suitcase with both ski gloves and swim goggles. You'll gain insight on how to build an adaptive team in uncertain times, with details on coaching sellers and understanding buyers.

It is guaranteed that neither life nor the economy will be static, so commitment to continuous improvement is essential to success. That way you'll always be innovating, always be honing your corporate resilience. ■



# 3 Ways to Drive Growth Through Frontline Sales During Inflationary Periods

Your frontline sellers have the power to grow your business in difficult times—here's how to help them do it

THIS ARTICLE IS A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BY STEVEN LUBOW, A PARTNER IN MCKINSEY'S ATLANTA OFFICE, AND CHRIS LANGLOIS, AN ASSOCIATE PARTNER IN THE MIAMI OFFICE, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MICHAEL HARNEY AND ANDY EARNEST, REPRESENTING VIEWS FROM MCKINSEY'S GROWTH, MARKETING & SALES PRACTICE.

With inflation in the United States hovering at around 7.7 percent, frontline sellers are under pressure to keep orders coming in, while customers are trying to minimize expenses. But combating inflation goes beyond hoping your organization (and frontline) will prove to be resilient—it requires concrete action to reset priorities and change selling behaviors that will ensure profitable growth.

In fact, our research shows that consistent growers ramp up expansion or capability-building efforts when others are battening down the hatches to weather the storm.

Resilient organizations don't just bounce back from misfortune or change; they turn shocks into opportunities. And the most resilient invest in their talent. This may be a good time to invest in your frontline sellers, build new capabilities, and empower them to help your business thrive in difficult times.

The Brazilian Formula One winner Ayrton Senna famously said, "You cannot overtake 15 cars in sunny weather... but you can when it's raining." The current economic conditions and inflationary pressures provide a unique opportunity for companies to reposition themselves.

Here are three concrete actions business leaders can take to do so:

### **ACTION 1: CLOSE THE INFORMATION LOOP**

The days of simply selling a product are gone. Frontline sellers need information and market insight to do their jobs well. Considering the last bout of hyperinflation was in the early '80s, most of today's sales teams have not sold in an environment with the competing pressures of quota attainment, internal margin protection, and external client uncertainty.

While sellers may understand inflation at a conceptual level, they may not fully grasp its impact on the business they represent, the implications to their client base, or the role they can—and must—play to adjust their own selling behavior in response.

The first step is to ensure your frontline teams are equipped with all the facts. This requires establishing the right touchpoints to discuss what's changing in the current operating environment, as well as how inflationary factors are affecting your business. For example, many top-performing companies create forums to educate frontline teams on the holistic health of the business, headwinds that may be emerging, how targets and priorities may need to change, and how to adjust interactions with customers.

If frontline sellers understand the bigger picture, it enables them to think as a business partner in their client interactions. Armed with the right contextual information, your sales teams will be better equipped to move beyond mere pricing discussions to deeper communication about shared business concerns.

# ACTION STEPS

## ACTION 2: INVEST IN CAPABILITY BUILDING

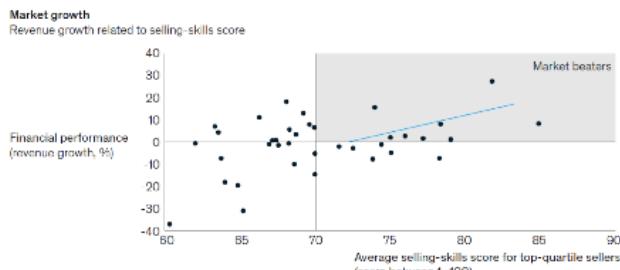
Frontline sellers also need analytical and strategic skills to best serve customers. They should be able to understand data, derive insights, and strategize on partnership options that will materially influence the customer's profit and loss. Therefore, capability building is imperative, and chances are, if you're not investing in your sales capabilities, your competitors are investing in theirs. In our recent survey of B2B sales organizations, 97 percent of respondents said upskilling frontline sellers is an immediate priority.

Investing in learning and development programs can be a solution for developing top talent. Best practices for designing and implementing such programs include making learning personalized, serving it in small bites, and reinforcing it regularly. Short, targeted, easy-to-digest content helps to keep participants engaged, increases their chances of retaining knowledge—and it takes less time.

When done with the right recipe, it works. Companies that tailor learning programs to frontline sellers' needs are 1.3 times more likely to be outperformers.

Additionally, capability building should not be confined to frontline sellers. Managers are the lynchpin in driving team performance. You could support and equip managers with the skills to evaluate sellers' capabilities, coach to fill the gaps, and help sellers adapt to the new skills they are being asked to master. Equipping sales with next-generation capabilities takes effort, but the payoff is significant. Top-quartile teams can deliver four to five times higher sales growth than bottom-quartile players (Exhibit 1).

Next-generation sales capabilities can drive four to five times higher growth.



Equipping sales with data-driven account planning, negotiation, relationship-building, and networking capabilities can result in 4–5x higher growth than bottom quartile players.

## ACTION 3: RETHINK COMPENSATION AND INCENTIVES

Compensation plans and incentives work best when aligned with the behaviors and results they are intended to produce. One way companies can craft effective compensation plans is by tying incentives to outcomes that individuals can influence directly. Quite often, incentives are tied to general outcomes, such as overall company earnings. This metric is likely beyond any individual's control, and basing incentives on this distant outcome can weaken their effectiveness.

As business conditions change, incentives could change, too. While adjusting sales quotas in the middle of an operating year may not be practical, companies frequently introduce short-term bonuses or "kickers" around price capture or margin performance to motivate shifts in selling behavior and accelerate revenue ahead of competitors.

When it comes to recognizing and rewarding performance, you might take the route of encouraging outperformance, not just good performance. An S-curve payout can support outperformance, but to make it work, you need to carefully calibrate payouts and implement a rigorous review process for all initiatives (Exhibit 2).

The bonus-payout curve aligns incentives and targets and can be shaped based on key questions.



Finally, design compensation plans to be simple, specific, and precise. Best practice indicates that any incentive program, both financial and non-financial, should be simple to understand and communicate.

Investing in the capabilities of your frontline sales teams and managers provides a valuable lever to create resiliency, strengthen customer relationships—and emerge stronger when the rain clears. ■

# Overcoming Digital Overload: 4 Benefits of Consolidating Your Sales Tech Stack

BY BOB BASILIERE, VICE PRESIDENT, SALES AT ALLEGRO



Remember using 1, 2, 3 for spreadsheets? Wordperfect for word processing? If you're of a certain age, you relied on those tools and more in the 1980s. There were multiple spreadsheets, presentation tools, and word processors until Microsoft consolidated the office productivity market.

It's a pattern that repeats in every major software category. There are a number of niche tools until the market becomes intolerant of having too

many choices and solutions converge.

This same force is playing out in the sales enablement space. In recent years, the number of learning and enablement tools has skyrocketed. There are hundreds of SalesTech vendors that offer collaboration tools, mobile learning tools, content development tools, and analytics tools.

In fact, the global average of learning tools and platforms in use today by any given company is 23—double the number that companies were using in 2011. Sales reps alone use an average of six tools.

Salespeople are crying "uncle"—there are simply too many tools. Companies are hamstrung by redundant systems that don't talk to each other, unnecessary subscription fees, administrative overhead, low adoption rates, rep confusion, and lower productivity.

## EVOLUTION OF SALES ENABLEMENT INDUSTRY

In response to this digital overload, the sales enablement industry is consolidating. Players are merging. Learning providers are adding content management capabilities and vice versa. Specialized, single-threaded tools will find it difficult to win. Comprehensive solutions rather than siloed tools are emerging as the smart choice.

2023 will be a very different year for sales organizations. Budgets are being level-set or cut. Organizations need to rethink headcount, processes, and tools. Effective sales teams will use modern platforms offering learning, sales content, and virtual selling capabilities while rebalancing resources.

Today you need to take a holistic approach to meet long-term needs. Innovative sales enablement technology can help you deliver a single interface to sellers for learning, content, collaboration, conversation intelligence, and virtual selling. With a comprehensive platform, multiple functions can deliver insights to drive results in the next normal—while lowering both cost and seller frustration.

## HOW TO DO MORE WITH LESS: BENEFITS OF TECH STACK CONSOLIDATION

Building the right tech stack is not an easy job, but the benefits are huge. You know from experience that the more complex the learning process is, the less likely sellers are to embrace it. A fragmented approach that relies on multiple tools for different training and enablement initiatives hurts adoption, leads to poorly trained sellers, and ultimately hurts your bottom line.

Most sales enablement leaders are stretched too thin to manage multiple systems. In addition to subscription fees, there's the time and effort to maintain each platform.

Replacing siloed tools such as LMS, CMS, coaching, role playing, reinforcement, and call coaching with an all-in-one solution is a practical decision for several reasons. You gain system-wide benefits that you're not able to realize unless you have a comprehensive platform.

With a holistic approach you can:

1. Gain a 360-degree view of behavior and

content correlated with success, instead of making assumptions and drawing correlations based on the content reps share or the exercises they perform.

2. Reduce workload with a seamless administration of a single solution versus management of multiple separate platforms.
3. Increase user adoption with a frictionless experience for reps who can access, create, and share content, get training, and collaborate with their teams without switching tools.
4. Cut costs by eliminating subscriptions to redundant tools.

## 5 ESSENTIAL CAPABILITIES OF THE NEW SALES ENABLEMENT STACK

But how do you know what tools to implement? Make sure you choose a solution that delivers the core capabilities to help your organization succeed.

There's a new breed of integrated learning platforms that offer a holistic approach to sales enablement. These solutions accelerate the sales cycle, drive higher average contract values, and boost profitability in the sales organization.

The five essential capabilities of the modern sales enablement tech stack are:

1. Onboarding and Training
2. Content and Messaging
3. Coaching and Collaboration
4. Product Launches and Rollouts
5. Virtual Selling

## DELIVER NEXT-LEVEL SALES ENABLEMENT

Imagine using a different tool to create documents, presentations, datasheets, and email. That's what today's sellers navigating multiple sales tools face in most companies. Anyone who still has that mindset for sales enablement technology will be at a competitive disadvantage within the next two years.

With the uncertain economy and tightening budgets, making quota is tougher—and more critical—than ever. Sales enablement—when done well—is proven to drive results. Given its powerful impact on the bottom line, a comprehensive sales enablement solution is no longer optional. It's a crucial element for survival, growth, and success in today's ultra-competitive economy. ■

# How Do You Get Sellers to Use Marketing Content?

## Behavioral Science Has the Answer

BY LEFF BONNEY, PH.D., RESEARCH DIRECTOR, B2B DECISIONLABS, AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, SALES AND MARKETING, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY SALES INSTITUTE

It's an ailment that afflicts even the best revenue teams: Marketing creates content for sales, but sellers don't use it.

Over the years, there have been countless theories about why this happens. Is the content misaligned with sellers' needs? Is marketing's message fundamentally flawed?

The rallying cry of "sales and marketing alignment" still reverberates as a best practice from nearly 20 years ago. Yet, for all the proposed solutions to collaboration challenges, organizations continue to struggle to get sellers to use the content that marketing provides.

Sellers and marketers have more access to shared customer data than ever before. Enablement platforms such as [Allego](#) and others give sellers easier access to content and training

in the moments they need it most.

So, what's really going on?

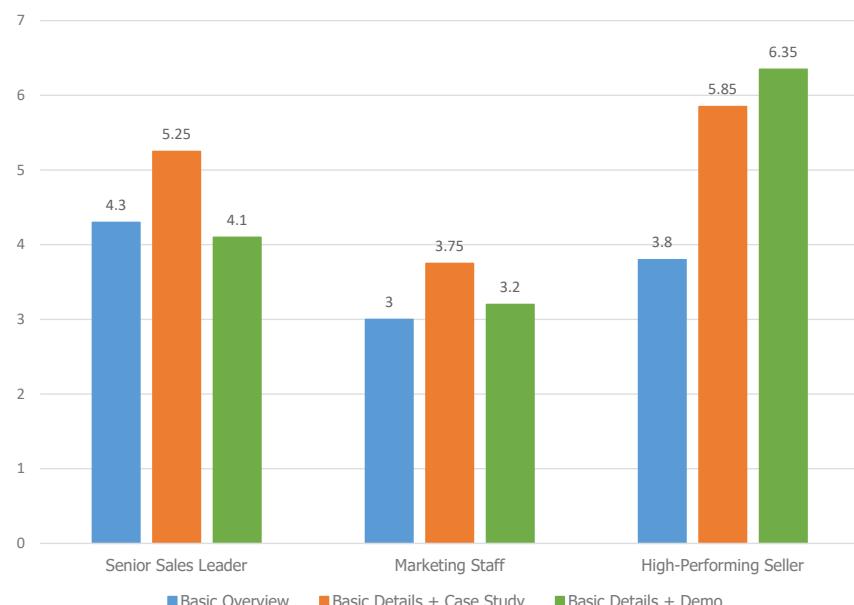
**B2B DecisionLabs** recently partnered with Allego to learn the answer. Working with an enterprise-level sales organization, we conducted a behavioral research study of sellers' willingness to use a new piece of marketing collateral.

### PRESENTING CONTENT 3 WAYS

**For the study**, we worked with over 300 sellers from 11 different regions at a large capital equipment company in the healthcare industry. Sellers split into nine groups and watched a recorded video of a sales manager, a product marketer, or a high-performing seller introduce a new piece of marketing collateral.

**Each group watched one of three different presenters share the content using one of three different story methods.** Every presenter followed the same scripts and used the same piece of content.

**Impact of Presenter x Message on Likelihood of Use**



The data revealed two interesting findings:

- Sellers were much more likely to use content when they learned about it from a high-performing peer vs. a sales leader or marketer.
- Sellers were significantly more likely to use content after watching a high-performing peer provide basic details and demonstrate how to use the content in a customer conversation, as opposed to only providing basic details about the asset or including a case study.

## 2 SCIENCE-BACKED WAYS TO GET SELLERS ENGAGED WITH CONTENT

Here are two science-backed ways to motivate your sellers to use your content.

### 1. Recruit a High-Performing Seller

Overall, learning about new content from a high-performing peer led to much higher use intentions from sellers. And despite being a subject matter expert, the product marketing manager had the least impact on use intentions.

Some results varied based on the sellers' levels of experience and performance. Less experienced reps, for example, were significantly more likely to use the content after watching the senior sales leader.

Experienced sellers were more skeptical. They had lower-than-average use intentions after hearing from the sales leader or product manager. Interestingly, underperforming sellers were significantly more influenced by their high-performing peer.

### 2. Demonstrate the Conversation

When asked about the different approaches, **sellers indicated that they would be less willing to use the content after hearing only basic details about it.**

Sellers also felt differently about seeing the

» **Read the *GETTING SELLERS ENGAGED* Report Here**

case study vs. a demonstration of the content, depending on which presenter delivered it.

Overall, **sellers were significantly more likely to use the content after watching a role-play demonstration from a high-performing peer.**

Recruiting an all-star seller to demonstrate a buying conversation will have the best results.

However, if a sales leader or product marketing manager presents the content, using a customer case study is more likely to motivate sellers to use it.

Interestingly, the simulated role-play was the least effective method for sales leaders, showing worse results than presenting only the basic details of the content. This could be because sellers trust the example more when it's demonstrated by a colleague who they know has been successful—not an executive or product marketing manager.

## MOTIVATE YOUR SELLERS TO USE YOUR CONTENT

All the effort your marketers put into crafting the most persuasive collateral gets wasted if you can't persuade your sellers to use it. Worse yet, when sellers don't use what marketing provides, they often spend hours every week recreating their own content to use in customer conversations.

The results of this research show that even if you start with identical content, the presenter you choose—and the story they tell—significantly affects your sellers' willingness to use it.

Get our full research report, Getting Sellers Engaged, to dig deeper into the results of this study and see what else you can do to motivate your sellers to use new content. ■

**“Sellers are much more likely to use content when they learn about it from a high-performing peer vs. a sales leader or marketer.”**



## Take the Lead: Coach Your Sellers for Top Performance

BY ANDY SPRINGER, CHIEF CLIENT OFFICER AT [RAIN GROUP](#) AND CO-AUTHOR OF *VIRTUAL SELLING: HOW TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS, DIFFERENTIATE, AND WIN SALES REMOTELY*

By most accounts, organizations can look forward to grappling with a wide range of challenges in the year ahead—an uncertain economic outlook, continued supply chain issues, rising costs, tight labor markets, digital transformations, shifting buyer demands, and the list goes on.

More than ever, sales organizations need extremely focused and highly motivated sales teams who show up with their A-game every day. Given the unpredictable external environment,

smart sales leaders will take advantage of the levers where they have influence. Sales coaching can be one of those levers.

The best sales organizations (what we call elite performers) are 2x more likely to prioritize and maximize the time sales managers spend coaching their teams, according to the Top-Performing Sales Organization report. Recent research shows that with the combination of an effective manager, regular coaching, and effective sales training, sellers are 63% more likely to be top performers.

And, believe me, you want top performers on your team. Their average win rate on proposed sales is dramatically higher: 72% vs. just 47% for the rest.

It's clear coaching is highly correlated with performance. But what exactly should sales managers coach for?

## COACHING FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Too often sales coaching devolves into unstructured catch-ups, ad hoc problem-solving, and periodic account reviews. These are important parts of coaching, but effective sales coaching requires more.

The goal is to coach for a transformation—both an action (e.g., better deal management) and accountability from the seller to see it through.

Here are four ways sales managers and coaches can hold sellers accountable.

### 1. Overcome a Lack of Motivation

Coaches can reignite motivation by helping sellers set goals and reconnect with their “why”—their core motivations for success. Using a tool like a goal-setting worksheet—where the seller identifies their goals, their “why,” and the actions and habits that will get them there—can be the basis for a regular schedule of ongoing conversations between seller and coach.

### 2. Deconstruct the “Not Enough Time” Excuse

When sellers say they don’t have enough time, it usually means they have time management and prioritization issues. Coaches can guide sellers to use personal productivity tactics, including:

- Create a weekly action plan. For the most efficient use of time, it’s helpful to have a plan that includes the seller’s most important activities for that week. Coach sellers to keep their priority list short. With scrutiny, sellers can shrink almost any list, which increases the chances of success.
- Learn to say no. It’s easy to say yes to everything. It’s also a saboteur of productivity and performance. Give sellers permission to say yes to activities only if doing so helps them achieve their goals. Of course, that’s rare, which is kind of the point.
- Develop a productive morning routine. Teach sellers the importance of a solid morning routine, one that gets them in the right frame of mind. Starting the day with your greatest impact activity, when you have the most energy and focus, means it’s more likely to get done.

### 3. Limit Distractions

It’s difficult for a seller to turn off alerts and notifications. That next email or text might be critical to moving a deal forward. But not every notification is important nor do notifications require round-the-clock attention. Unfortunately, too many sellers waste time on these and other distractions.

Have sellers try blocking out “do not disturb” time or turning off notifications altogether. Some sellers benefit from a change in environment or a reorganization of their space to reduce distractions.

Yet another tactic for curbing distraction is TIME sprinting. During sprints, the seller allocates a specific amount of time to a pre-planned activity and focuses only on that activity. Try this while writing a proposal, planning a negotiation, prospecting, or anything that requires focus.

### 4. Close Productivity Gaps

Productivity is the result of multiple decisions throughout the day. It’s also the composite of behaviors and habits sustained over time. Consistency is key.

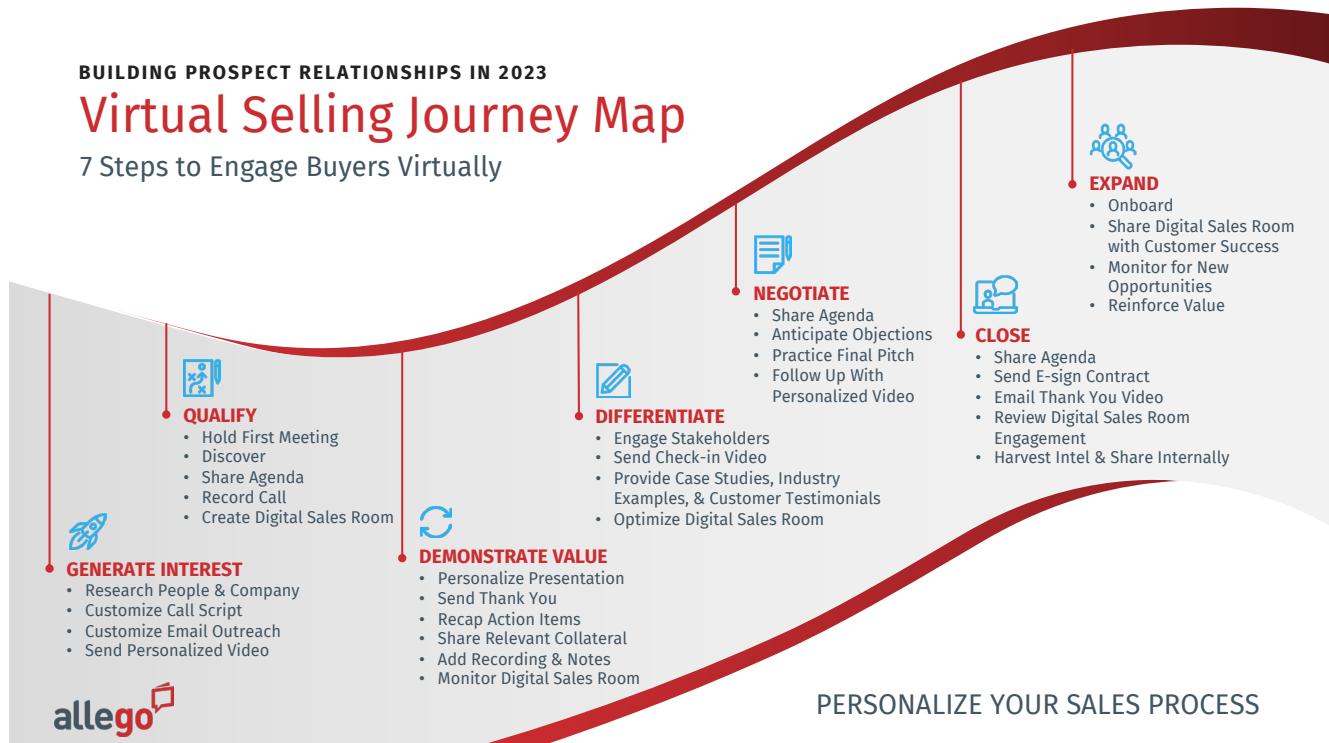
For example, if I’m procrastinating starting a task, I say out loud, “3, 2, 1, go!” to get started on it, or “3, 2, 1, stop!” to quit something that doesn’t move me toward my goals.

Sales managers and coaches can also introduce time-based challenges for sellers, like the RAIN Group 90-Day Productivity Code Challenge, or commitment contracts and accountability partners that help keep sellers accountable.

## BUILD A TEAM OF TOP PERFORMERS WITH SALES COACHING

Sales coaching done right—with accountability built in—can have a significant impact on team performance. The reason is simple: Accountability systems help guarantee consistency over time.

It’s one thing to complete a single task after being asked to do so, or to ignore a distraction for a day; it’s another thing to commit to executing over time. Put your sales team in the best possible position to deal with the challenges in the year ahead by coaching them for action and accountability. ■



## Virtual Selling Skills Checklist

It's a hybrid world. Sellers must collaborate with colleagues at home and in the office. They also have to host drama-free and productive virtual sales meetings with remote buyers.

Use this checklist to nurture prospects, share information, conduct demos, and host meetings without the benefit of being in person.

### RECORD PERSONALIZED VIDEOS

Video is a differentiator for B2B deals. Get comfortable recording yourself and send them to buyers throughout the sales process.

### MANAGE TIME

Stay on top of the agenda and keep others on the call on track. Post the agenda in the meeting chat so any adjustments can be made up front.

### ENGAGE BUYERS

Spark engagement and learn about your buyers using polls, chat, and interactive content to connect with meeting participants.

### DEVELOP "STAGE PRESENCE"

Make the best impression on the virtual stage. Practice on video and get feedback on appearance, speech, body language, and style to be as engaging as possible.

### SHARE SCREEN

Make sure participants can easily read what's on screen. Present in full-screen mode and don't share when you aren't using slides so participants can see each other.

### PREP BEFORE MEETING

Follow a process that includes an agenda, meeting checklist, tech tips, and reminders to improve buyer experiences and reduce technical difficulties.

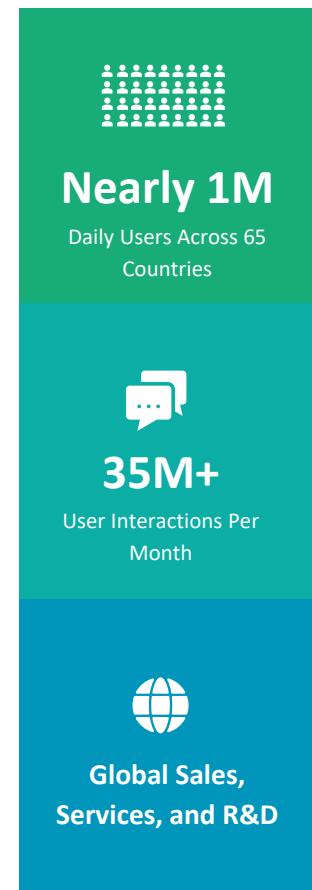
### BUILD TRUST AND RAPPORT

Rapport is more difficult when you're virtual. Build "getting-to-know-you" moments into every meeting. Leave a few minutes at the beginning and/or end of calls to chat.



## A Decade of Winning Sellers and Buyers

We built the #1 solution for transforming your organization with enablement technology made for today's distributed teams



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# 10 Steps to Future-Proof Your Sales Force & Transform Results

BY MIKE KUNKLE, VICE PRESIDENT, SALES EFFECTIVENESS SERVICES, SPARXIQ AND AUTHOR OF THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF SALES ENABLEMENT

The start of the new year causes one to reflect on the past year and contemplate how to improve in the year ahead. Rarely is this as true as it is now, given recessionary challenges, widespread layoffs, and concerns about evolving buyer behavior and how to best respond.

One of my favorite axioms for fellow enablers is: "Advice about how to figure out what's right for you is 10 times more valuable than being told what to do."

With this theme in mind, and the opportunity we have to rethink and retool for an even more successful year ahead, here are 10 steps you can take to future-proof your sales force and transform your sales results in 2023.

## STEP 1: STRATEGY FIRST, THEN TACTICS, THEN TALENT & EXECUTION

Often leaders focus on tactics—hiring, training, and coaching execution—before ensuring strategy and go-to-market planning are sound and aligned. To ensure success, start with strategic planning. With that foundation, continue to go-to-market planning. Effective talent management, skills development, and tactical execution should support your strategy, not the other way around.

For more detail on this process, read [How to Resize and Retool Your Sales Force the Right Way](#) and view [this chart](#).



## STEP 2: BUILD BUYER ACUMEN

**Buyer acumen** is the first of my **Building Blocks of Sales Enablement** and is foundational to any sales transformation effort. Begin by researching your buyers to gather and document critical information that will help both marketers and sellers generate interest and sell more effectively.

Focus on:

- Roles/Goals/Responsibilities
- Current and Desired Future State with Challenges, Opportunities, Impacts, Needs, Outcomes, Priorities (COIN-OP)
- Common Initiatives
- Size of Problems and Budgets
- Metrics (how they are measured/evaluated)
- Other Factors: Risks, Pressures, Preferences, Politics

Once buyers are engaged with you, you can layer in:

- Buying Process and Buying Committee (how and with whom they buy)
- Overall Decision Criteria (factors influencing their decision)

- Individual buying process exit criteria—what each buyer needs to see, hear, feel, understand, and believe in the current stage to feel comfortable moving forward
- Value Drivers
- Buyer Types (financial, feasibility, and functional buyers)
- Common Concerns

## STEP 3: ALIGN SALES PROCESS WITH CUSTOMER LIFECYCLE

Many buyers are not professional procurement leaders, and their process is not always clearly defined or linear. But most do progress through some semblance of awareness, interest, exploration, comparison, and decision making.

Rather than forcing a structure on something that is fluid, your role is to ascertain where your buyers are, where they are headed, and how to adapt and respond appropriately. Sellers who

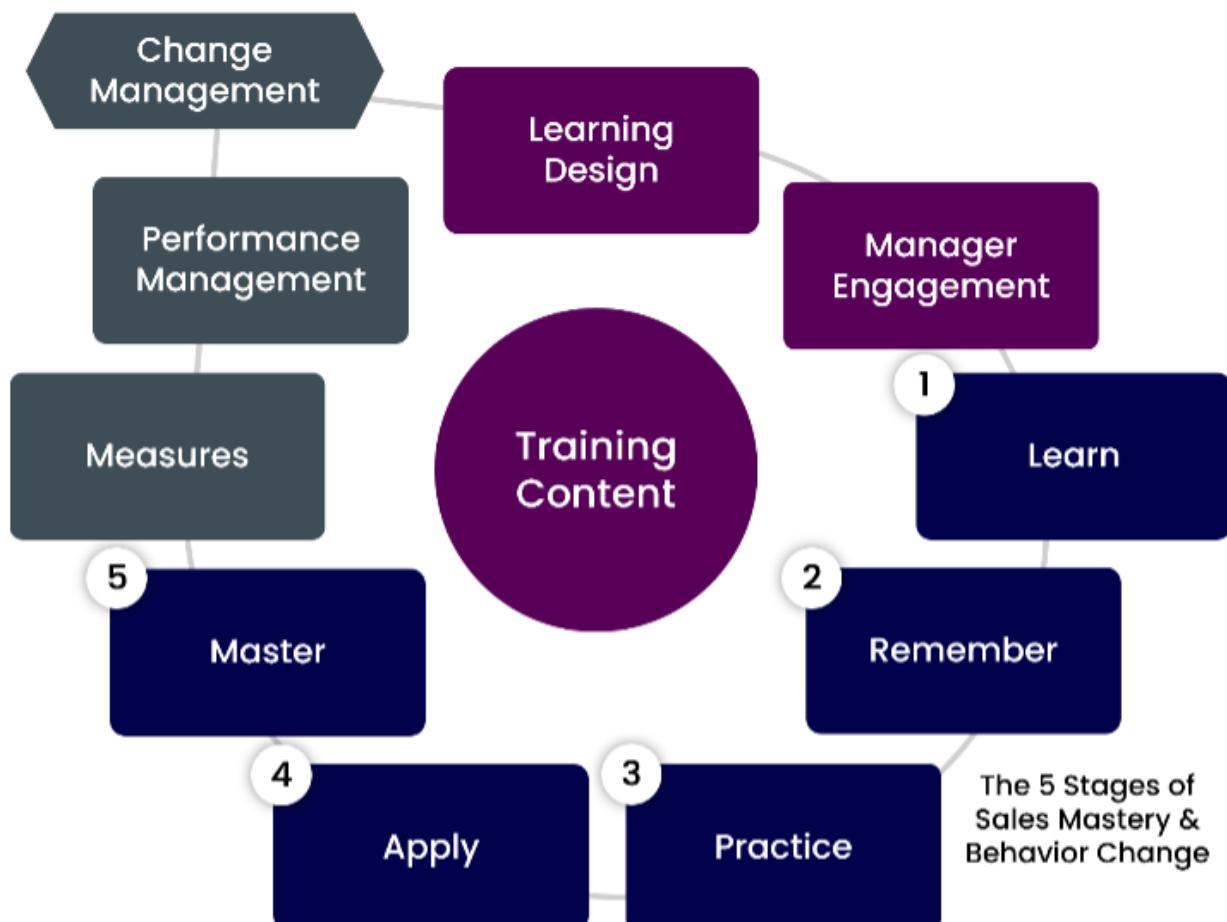
master this capability will better support their buyers. See [this chart](#) for an example.

## STEP 4: ADOPT AN EFFECTIVE SALES METHODOLOGY

Methodology is how your reps sell as they move through the sales process. Most companies don't have a complete methodology that spans the entire customer lifecycle. In some companies, it's almost a free-for-all.

According to CSO Insights' 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Sales Enablement Study, "Only sales process and sales methodology adoption rates above 75 percent resulted in above average results for revenue plan attainment, quota attainment, and win rates."

Think about the adoption rates in your company. Are you at 75 percent? In most companies, this represents a significant opportunity to reap rewards. Many give up far



# "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

~ WILL ROGERS

too early, before the snowball effect leads to hockey stick improvements. Stay the course.

## STEP 5: DEVELOP BUYER-CENTRIC MESSAGING

Effective messaging plugs into your sales methodology. Building on the previous steps, your sellers can craft and deliver messaging that is far more personalized, compelling, and influential than what most sellers use.

Using a matrix that standardizes your buyer persona criteria will allow you or your product marketing team to develop persona-based messaging founded on your buyer acumen work. Then, your sellers can take the final step to customize messaging for the real people in those roles. I call this "multilingual selling," and it makes an average methodology far more effective. See [this chart](#) for details.

## STEP 6: BUILD A BUYER ENGAGEMENT CONTENT PLAN

Marketing-provided content plays a significant role in supporting buying decisions. Your sales and marketing content can be based on everything we've talked about so far, with [buyer engagement content](#) designed to satisfy buying process exit criteria, per persona, per stage.

## STEP 7: USE A SALES TRAINING SYSTEM

Can you see how these steps are converging? This is what makes them more powerful together than separate. Next, you need to get sellers doing everything as planned. This starts, of course, with training.

As you can see, the [sales training system](#) was designed to ensure training effectiveness, as well as foster adoption and behavior change. It's not a full change model, though, because it doesn't include the "why" story, building a coalition, or other strategies from fuller change management

models. It does, however, provide a clear path for implementing sales training effectively and getting outstanding results.

## STEP 8: DEVELOP SALES COACHING EXCELLENCE

Coaching is the single most powerful tool for guiding behavior change and improving employee performance and company results. A successful coach identifies performance gaps, gets seller buy-in to improving, develops tactical practice sessions, and fosters continual reinforcement and reflection. By facilitating and delivering feedback, training, and coaching as needed, sales coaches can inspire, enable, and lift competence to achieve sales mastery. See [this chart](#) to learn more.

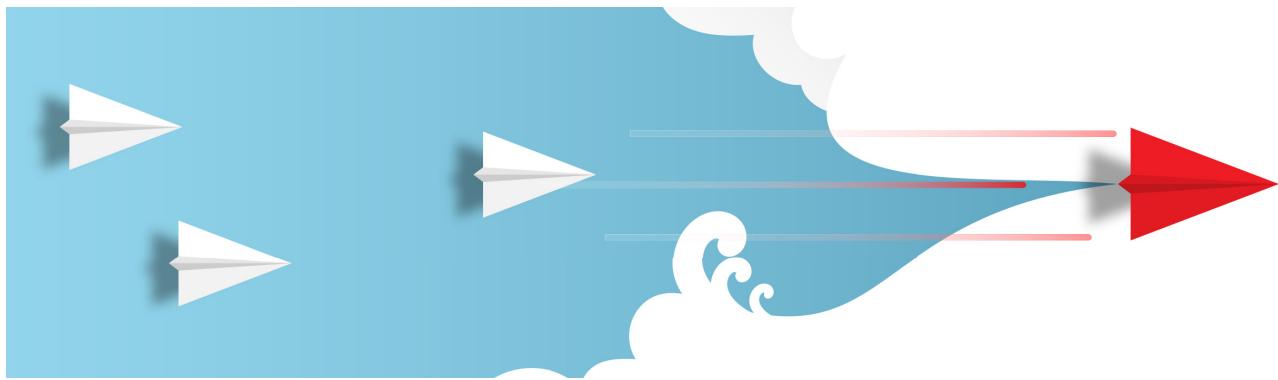
## STEP 9: IMPLEMENT A SALES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

A sales management system helps managers operate at the highest level of effectiveness. Even if you execute all the previous steps, you won't maximize potential without an aligned approach to frontline sales management. This system ensures that best practices are in place and executed effectively.

## STEP 10: USE A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CYCLE

The last step is the simplest in theory but not always done. Once you get the first nine steps in place, in at least a "Good Enough For Now" state, it's time to start a continuous improvement cycle.

"Future-proofing" has an expiration date. As things change or evolve, whether it's buying behavior, new products, ideal customer profiles, economic conditions, your competitive set, or other factors, you should flow back through the 10 steps and continually improve your plans, execution, and ultimately, your growth and success. ■



## Sales Leadership in a Downturn: 3 Key Steps for Growing Revenue

BY KEN VALLA, PRESIDENT AND CO-FOUNDER AT THE [VALLA GROUP, INC.](#), SALES STRATEGIST, AUTHOR, AND SALES EXCELLENCE THOUGHT LEADER

Today's B2B companies face turbulence. A remote workforce is suffering from burnout. People feel less connected with their teams and businesses. Economic headwinds are causing job security concerns and restructuring.

**"I need visibility and to understand where our growth is going to come from."**

— SVP SALES, FORTUNE 30 COMPANY

**"We need to figure out our sales tech stack, get our people adopting the technology, and that should help drive growth"**

— SVP FIELD OPERATIONS, FORTUNE 30 COMPANY

their organizations, longer time to proficiency for new sellers, slow to no new logo growth, and very few sellers able to sell the new offerings their companies bring to market.

What should a sales leader do? We suggest taking action in three ways: simplify, guide, and collaborate.

### STEP 1: **SIMPLIFY YOUR SALES PROCESS**

The first step is to simplify your sales process. Define how you want your sellers to work, determine the actions you need them to take each day, then deploy technology to enable those actions.

Salespeople today must engage with a broader range of stakeholders. In the technology space, salespeople must reach outside of IT and call on Line of Business (LOB) stakeholders. In life sciences, they need to go beyond the physician and call on health systems and administration.

Sellers must proactively pursue these new

No doubt all these factors will make 2023 challenging. But despite these uncertainties, sales leaders still have one thing in mind: growth. We work with CROs of Fortune 500 companies, SMB firms, and public sector teams. Across the board, they want to grow their businesses. However, they face low quota attainment across

# "I need to triple our services revenue over the next five years."

— SVP ENTERPRISE SALES, FORTUNE 100 COMPANY

stakeholders to start the **sales conversation**. This means early-stage selling—and the actions you need your team to do each day—looks drastically different than it did five years ago. Technology alone can't solve this.

Your reps must analyze the data about your customers' business landscape and interpret what it means for organizational and functional priorities. Sellers should hypothesize about potential opportunities and feed the top of your funnel. This will lead to more opportunities and provide visibility into where growth comes from.

## STEP 2: GUIDE SALES CONVERSATIONS

The second step is to guide your sales team by providing conversational guardrails. Train sellers how to get from point A to point E in a conversation and how to progress a deal through a series of conversations.

Growth comes from new logos, new strategies, and new offerings. The problem is this typically requires a new sales motion or way of working with your customers. Salespeople want a **guided selling process** that prompts them on how to operate, how to engage with the customer, how to guide the customer, and how to use technology to optimize the experience.

Teaching tactics such as how to do discovery or qualify opportunities is insufficient. Sellers want and need more structure and a holistic approach. They need to see how these skills fit together in a conversation or set of conversations. Today, most sellers are left to figure this out on their own.

Consider the football team that focuses on blocking, tackling, and catching. These are good things to focus on separately, but how do these skills come together in the context of a play? And how does each play contribute to the vision of winning the game?

The same is true in sales. Guide sellers on what the flow of each conversation should look and sound like. Define a pathway for them and emphasize the outcomes that are desired from each conversation. Most importantly, ensure they learn how to string together multiple conversations to win a deal and don't just focus on a single conversation.

## STEP 3: COLLABORATE AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE

The third step is to proactively drive structured collaboration and enable sellers to learn and share with others who are doing the job and facing the same obstacles. Customers don't buy solutions every day, but you sell to multiple customers. Use that knowledge to guide your sellers forward.

All sales organizations want their people to collaborate. However, in today's remote, fast-paced environment, it needs to be structured.

I was working with the CEO of an SMB firm who wanted to double revenue in the next two years. One thing stood out: The firm's sellers never collaborated in a structured way. Information sharing was only via informal conversations with close colleagues.

Yes, they had coaching from their managers in one-on-one sessions. The BDRs and outside sellers spoke when they had time. But this was a group of people literally sitting next to one another who were not collaborating. What about salespeople working from home?

Salespeople want to collaborate. Seasoned sellers say they need help. This can easily come in the form of structured discussions. Set up cohorts and provide a framework to discuss account strategies, deal strategies, common challenges of getting to line of business owners, etc. You pick the subject matter but use this to drive discussion and best practice sharing.

## DRIVING GROWTH IN 2023

Enabling your sales team to drive business growth in 2023 and beyond is about these three things: Simplify – Guide – Collaborate. Don't let the other noise get in the way. You know how to do this. Let's get it done! ■

# Know More, Sell More, Be More

## 6 Lessons from Smith+Nephew on a Growth-Minded Sales Culture

BY: KALEB M. SUNWALL | SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL COMMERCIAL TRAINING + EDUCATION | [SMITH+NEPHEW](#)  
 & STEPHANIE IBARRA | GLOBAL TRAINING OPERATIONS DIRECTOR



Ask any successful salesperson you know, "What contributed to your success?" and the answer will most likely be something related to their **desire for growth**. To achieve growth, you must have a mindset that is open to learning new behaviors and the curiosity about what's possible.

Growth-minded sellers want to be fed, nurtured, coached, and they thrive in an environment where growth opportunities are abundant.

Many companies find it difficult to attract, develop, and retain top talent. It is costly to train sellers only to see them leave a few years later. To keep top sellers, you need a continuous growth journey, with multiple levels of learning available to those curious and adventurous sales professionals.

In this article, I will share six lessons learned about our commercial training strategy, the benefits of continuous learning, and how

committing to the right activities and behaviors can have an exponential impact on our business.

### COMMITMENT TO WORLD-CLASS TRAINING

Smith+Nephew is on a journey to provide world-class commercial training and lifelong learning experiences, from hire-to-retire. We endeavor to strengthen our talent and capabilities and make the company a destination employer.

Traditionally, sales training investments have focused on new hires, product launches, and annual sales conferences. Training programs are often isolated events, without a structured learning pathway throughout an employee's tenure. Variations in reinforcement and coaching leads to knowledge loss and a diluted return on training investments.

At Smith+Nephew, however, we believe training is a catalyst for growth. It must be offered continuously over an employee's career to grow their capabilities and competency. Knowledge and skills can be improved and retained through routine coaching and assessments and must be embedded into learning strategy.

High-performing sales professionals, with advanced skills and behaviors aligned to organizational competency models, have better business outcomes and a positive impact on the company's bottom line.

## DATA-BASED TRAINING STRATEGY

Our Global Commercial Training and Education (GCT+E) team has a simple purpose defined in three words: equip, grow, engage. We equip commercial teams with the knowledge, skills, and behaviors to grow revenue and exceed sales targets. These are certainly worthy goals to pursue, but is it realistic to expect that training is a magic elixir that can deliver these outcomes? The answer is yes.

Industry studies have long shown the relationship between employer-sponsored training and improved engagement, reduced turnover, and better job performance. To understand if these industry findings also applied to Smith+Nephew, GCT+E analyzed data from over 1,200 sales reps and 21 training cohorts over a 2-year period. The team partnered with an outside analytics firm and tested several hypotheses on the levers for improved individual and team performance.

We applied these lessons to our commercial training strategy, transforming learning methods based on science, data insights, and a more agile team relentlessly focused on embedding a growth culture within the sales teams.

## 6 LESSONS FROM SMITH+NEPHEW

These lessons may seem obvious, even common sense. However common sense is not always common practice. The discipline required for sustained high performance and world-class results is uncommon, yet predictable and repeatable once you understand it. Here's what we learned:

### 1. Know More to Sell More

Better performance in training courses leads to better sales performance. Simply said, knowledge is a superpower. Growth-minded sellers want to know more than peers. They don't just pass the certifications, they ace them.

### 2. Better Coaching = Better Engagement

Manager coaching and reinforcement increases rep satisfaction, engagement and sales performance. Our time and motion data

illustrated that many sales managers were spending too much time with underperformers. Coaching core performers was the #1 activity driving performance.

### 3. Remediate to Rejuvenate

Remediation training leads to exponential return on investment. We often train, and say "good luck." Continuous learning on product launches and market development initiatives yielded millions in growth and ROI. As we diagnosed gaps in performance or underperforming territories, we learned remediation training is the best medicine to rejuvenate sales.

### 4. The More You Learn, the More You Earn

Higher engagement in training leads to higher sales. The extra discretionary effort of curious sellers leads to increased knowledge, skill, and capacity to sell more than their peers. Many of the best sellers are like high-intensity interval learners. They learn in short bursts and small chunks, and over time, they accumulate a capacity to outsell and out earn their peers.

### 5. For Learning to Stick, You Must Not Quit

Sales performance peaks after training and then declines over time if not reinforced. Retention training is a must and is easily skipped and overlooked. Communities of practice and social groups keep learning alive and knowledge sharp. Embrace testing, quizzing, and re-certification events for maximum ROI on learning.

### 6. Train to Retain

Participation in advanced training courses leads to lower turnover. Sellers who seek out intermediate and advanced curriculum are less likely to leave the business. Companies should advocate for growth, as it's a fertilizer for hungry, talented sellers. As a bonus, they stay with the business longer, avoiding costly open roles and recruiting expenses.

## LEARNING IS A LIFELONG JOURNEY

Employees now recognize that learning is a lifelong journey, not an event. Learning is an engine for growth and enables higher performance. Training is a leveraged investment, where every dollar is a positive multiplier to profitability. Know more, sell more, be more. Six transformational words for any seller who wants to grow. ■

# allego<sup>®</sup> Celebrates 10 YEARS OF SALES ENABLEMENT

<b>2013</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Yuchun Lee and Mark Magnacca Co-Found Allego Inc.</li><li>1st Release, 1st Office, 1st Salesperson, 1st Customer</li><li>Allego 2.0 Release: App Store</li><li>VIDEO COACHING</li></ul>	<b>2014</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Allego 3.0 Release: New Nav</li></ul>
		<b>2015</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1st Strategic Partner: Matrix Achievement</li></ul>
		<b>2016</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Gartner® Cool Vendor for CRM Sales</li><li>MassTLC Innovative Sales &amp; Marketing Technology of the Year</li></ul>
<b>2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1st Customer Conference: Sales Success Summit</li><li>Inc. 500 5th Fastest-Growing Software Companies</li><li>Reaches 1M Views</li></ul>	<b>2018</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Boston Business Journal Best Places to Work</li><li>Allego 5.0 Release: Smart Groups</li><li>Deloitte 2018 Technology Fast 500 Award</li></ul>
		<b>2019</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1st Allego Operating Principles Awards</li></ul>
<b>2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ventilator Training Alliance (VTA) App Launch</li><li>1st Sales Success Virtual Showcase</li><li>The Adapter's Advantage Podcast Launch</li><li>Allego 6.0 Release: Conversation Intelligence, Digital Sales Rooms</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Representative Vendor in Gartner® Market Guide for Sales Enablement Platforms</li><li>Allego UK HQ Opens via Refract Acquisition</li><li>Reaches 10M Views</li><li>CONTENT MANAGEMENT</li></ul>
<b>2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Representative Vendor in Gartner® Market Guide for Revenue Enablement Platforms</li></ul>	<b>2022</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Allego 7.0 Release: Showreels, Dialog Simulator</li><li>Leader in Forrester Wave™: Sales Content Solutions</li></ul>
			<b>2023</b>
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