

Title:

Does Sales Training Matter?

Word Count:

302

Summary:

Of the 4,158 colleges and universities in the United States, only 35 offer sales curricula. Nevertheless, more than 50% of the 1.3 million college graduates in 2007 will become professional sellers on the first day of their employment. Yet, turnover rates, attrition and failure in-the-field for these young salespeople are astounding.

Keywords:

Sales Effectiveness

Article Body:

Of the 4,158 colleges and universities in the United States, only 35 offer sales curricula. Nevertheless, more than 50% of the 1.3 million college graduates in 2007 will become professional sellers on the first day of their employment. Yet, turnover rates, attrition and failure in-the-field for these young salespeople are astounding. The question is why?

Obviously, there is a dearth of effective sales training programs in the educational marketplace. Salespeople are simply not being properly equipped or prepared for their jobs. If—as Huthwaite contends—sales is a science, then it can be learned. But in order to be learned, it must first be properly taught. Perhaps a far more compelling reason why sales training matters is illustrated in the chart below, which details the breakdown of factors impacting sales success.

Branding strategy, pricing, product positioning and the competitive landscape all contribute to producing sales results. While other issues exist, their cumulative effect is minimal and as such these are designated as “etc.” The largest slice of the pie—the piece that actually differentiates companies in a commoditized world—is sales skills. In an increasingly homogenized marketplace, the brass ring goes to sellers who differentiate themselves in the sales process—those who know that success has more to do with “how” you sell than “what” you sell.

Sales leaders and L&D specialists have little if any impact on branding, pricing and product strategies—and neither group can influence the market forces that define the competitive landscape. But they can and do have a direct and profound impact on the skills of their salespeople. Sales force effectiveness is entirely

within their control. In an environment where product features and brand identity are no longer enough to "close the deal," sales skills are the primary engine of differentiation, value creation and profit margin growth in the new millennium.