

# HOW TO PROVE YOUR SALES ENABLEMENT IS DELIVERING REVENUE RESULTS

## A Guide to Choosing, Delivering and Measuring Effective Sales Training

### Sections

#### Part One

- 1 Background of Sales Training in Technology Companies
- 2 “With all that training, why have sales not improved?”
- 3 Why Teaching Product and Sales Process Is Not Enough

#### Part Two

- 4 How Do Salespeople Actually Become Enabled?
- 5 Advantages of Teaching Tactics
- 6 How to Deliver Measurable Results from Sales Enablement and How to Measure Results
- 7 Summary & Table of Tactics

### Introduction

Since the first technology product was introduced, companies have expected sales training to have a direct relationship to top line revenue.

As the industry has become more crowded and sophisticated, product life cycles have shortened and the pressure for revenue has increased. As a result, technology companies are looking toward sales training as a competitive edge, one that will create more sales and profits.

This hope has endured despite the fact that the majority of technology executives interviewed have questions about, or have expressed disappointment with the measurable results from their training investments.

Our research shows that an astounding 91% of technology sales managers and senior executives said they did not believe their existing program of sales training was delivering the promised results.\*

This paper will explore sales enablement -- including why, until recently, results from sales training have rarely been quantifiable, and how companies do achieve measurable, attributable impact on sales revenue.

We begin with a brief look at the history of sales enablement at technology companies and explore the reasons why measurement has been so difficult.

### Section One

#### Background of Sales Training in Technology Companies

The definition of sales training in the context of this paper is:

*Educational events and opportunities whose ultimate results are expected to create or improve sales.*

Under this definition, sales training should be expected to:

- Bring in prospects,
- Accelerate the sales cycle, and
- Impact / improve sales revenue.

It is often assumed – and even promised – that any offering called ‘sales training’ will enable the sales person to sell better and produce more revenue through improved personal skills. As this paper will show, that is not the case.

Early in industry history, technology companies were founded and run by logical, technically-oriented people such as engineers and mathematicians. These managers valued information and understood the importance of systems and process; it was with those methodologies that they created high quality, leading edge technologies.

For decades, technology companies viewed product training as the only

“...an astounding 91% said they did not believe their existing program of sales training was delivering the promised results.”

A Competitive Selling Tactics, LLP  
White Paper

Janette Racicot and Ken Wax  
www.competitivesellingtactics.com

\* Interviewed: 100 sales managers from 7 countries. For more on this, see our white paper, ‘Missed Opportunities: What Technology Sales Managers Report They Really Want From Sales Training’

required (and necessary) training for salespeople. Managers and designers felt that to sell their technology, all a salesperson needed was to understand its great technical advantages.

As the world became more complex and competitive, so did technology companies. Managers, who were familiar with systemized methods and modeling solutions, sought to apply those rules to selling. Sales process training was conceived.

Many companies sought methodologies that could instill predictability and an operational approach to the sales cycle while simultaneously providing control and information to management. By scanning a diagram of the sales cycle, it was simple to understand how a prospect could follow the sales person through a series of boxes and arrows and emerge as a customer.

To a technically oriented manager, this flow chart system was reminiscent of technology development - all that had to be done was consistently follow the rules and algorithms along a critical path and a quality customer would be created. This, understandably, had great appeal and today the majority of technology companies insist that their direct sales teams follow such a system. The same system is frequently leveraged into the channel with IBM, Microsoft, and numerous other significant vendors subsidizing process training and encouraging or even requiring their channel partners to attend.

“Today’s purchaser has changed dramatically in terms of their technical interest and know-how.”

“Customers and prospects are not simply waiting to be led through a process that is valuable to the salesperson.”

## Section Two

### “With all that training, why have sales not dramatically improved?”

To answer this critical question, let’s start by examining these two kinds of training -- product and sales process -- for the roles they play, the promises they were expected to fulfill, and why they cannot be usefully measured for results in the context of sales enablement.

#### Product Training = Infrastructure

Technical training is a part of every product launch. Without it, salespeople would not be able to understand or explain that new technology, and would look foolish. Without such data, it would be a challenge to sell even to their installed base.

A technical sale simply requires a foundation of technical knowledge. This specific frame of reference can only be found in one place – that vendor’s engineering department.

#### Why It Is Hard to Measure Results:

Although it may have been different early in the history of the technology industry, technical knowledge now has little direct correlation with bringing in sales. Early customers were often very technically oriented and knowledgeable. Today’s purchaser has changed dramatically in terms of their technical interest and know-how.

Certainly such information is important at points within the sales cycle, but in today’s more complicated world of solutions and business oriented buyers, bits and bytes are now of secondary importance to the business solution, its purpose and its impact.

This is why measuring such finite technical knowledge provides little valid data vis-à-vis the sales cycle and none regarding the selling skills of the account manager. It is rare that a major deal would hinge on a single benchmark or statistic.

So as a measure of sales enablement, it is questionable use. Important as a foundation for understanding the higher level benefit of its use – absolutely. But as a measurement of your sales force and their skill at winning in competitive situations – irrelevant.

#### Bottom Line on Product Training:

Technical training is important, but it is infrastructure. It is the knowledge your sales team should have about your product. It has importance within the sales cycle but will rarely move the sales cycle along. A sales force with only technical knowledge is not enabled. Such knowledge alone will not sell the widget.

This brings us to sales process training, and understanding its strengths and weaknesses in affecting sales revenue.

#### Process Training = Management Tool

Sales process training has become popular, at least in part, as a result of management’s desire to understand and maintain control in an ever increasingly complex and dynamic world of selling.

For management, a sales process offers a way to get a handle on the mysteries of the sales cycle. Its logical application appeals to both technical and line managers since it gives them a feeling of control and understanding of sales’ activities and its functions. A well run business realizes the benefits of having a systematic approach to understanding and tracking the sales process. Having such a methodology means having a common language for classifying opportunities, predicting sales revenue and identifying potential issues.

Process training, however, has clear limitations. Companies find that, while *understanding* of the desired process has improved, the *results* of that process have not dramatically increased – at least not in light of revenue expectations.

#### Why It Is Hard to Measure Results:

Sales process training teaches the salespeople the steps they would like the cus-

tomers to take. It implies that knowing the progression of a sale is directly related to guiding prospects successfully through those steps.

What management and account managers have learned, however, is that knowing the steps does not guarantee a win. Customers and prospects are not simply waiting to be led through a process that is valuable to the salesperson. On the contrary, they have their own goals, lives, budget pressures and buying process that are more important (and often contrary) to the vendor's desires and process.

Sales efforts become revenue because of specific events, knowledge and actions that impact prospects, not because processes are in place.

*Imagine the CFO of a large consumer products company who is scrutinizing a substantial investment in a technology solution. They would neither know nor care what step they are in that vendor's sales process.*

Customers care about what affects them and how they feel about that purchase in the context of their job and future business.

Instituting a sales process is independent of, and unrelated to, improving the actual

selling skills of the sales person. Therefore, by institutionalizing an opportunity management process, companies should expect improved accountability and knowledge of opportunity status. But they should not expect – nor be promised – that this training would result in improved communication, problem solving skills, interpersonal or collaboration skills or even a deeper buyer understanding – skills and knowledge critical to successful sales. One can memorize a process without increasing abilities in real-world selling situations.

Equally important, a sales process is static. It does not change nor is it automatically affected by changes in the marketplace. Improving the actual real world selling skills of the sales rep is the only way to adapt to a rapidly changing market and none of these skills are addressed nor improved by sales process training.

Bottom Line on Sales Process Training:

Process training has its value and is a useful management tool. But knowledge of a process is unrelated to one's selling skills when in competitive selling situations. A sales force armed only with sales process and technical knowledge is not enabled to increase sales over current levels, and is vulnerable even in current customers.

Section Three

**Teaching Product and Sales Process is Not Enough**

Many technology companies have substantial investments in product and process training, yet managers are still disappointed in sales results.

Part of the problem is that they have been promised that these initiatives -- teaching product and process -- would impact top line sales. As has been made clear, these trainings play an important role providing an infrastructure and management control, but they do nothing to

improve the actual selling skills of the sales organization. The reasons:

*1. Product Training + Process Training does not equal Sales Enablement*

When increasing sales is crucial this year, serving up additional product and process training rarely delivers measurable impact or salesperson enthusiasm. Salespeople can have a command of the details of technical and process training and still know little about specific ways to handle an aggressive competitor or slow-moving prospect.

*2. Investment - yes. Advantage - no*

Remember that CFO in our previous section? They will likely meet with several competing vendors, each of whom has had product training and wants them to follow their sales process methodology. (In fact, those competitors may even be using the same process!)

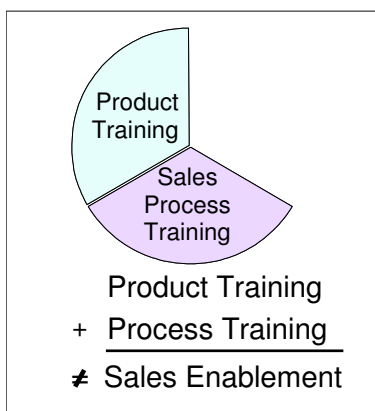
Salespeople can only have an advantage over the competition when they have a greater understanding of the customer's world, buying process, and know what to say and do to create a win.

*3. One Size Fits All*

By definition, a process must be generic and broad to achieve its goals. But each sale hinges on specifics – what is said and done and instigated in a specific sales situation by an individual sales rep. There are no generalities to be executed -- a very important fact of selling.

Management should understand that, when faced with a competitive challenge (lack of interest, price objection, stalled sale, misleading competitor, last minute obstacle, etc.), salespeople and customers have little use for generalities such as 'learn their pains', 'find a champion', or 're-convey the value proposition'.

*In our interviews with dozens of C-level executives around the world, not a single one has reported that they would detail their real world 'pains' with anyone outside their company. In particular, they would be unlikely to reveal them to sales-*



When it is crucial to increase sales, serving up more product and process training rarely delivers measurable impact or salesperson enthusiasm.

people, as this would be the equivalent to public disclosure and such disclosure could be job threatening.

**Bottom Line:**

If a sales rep is repeatedly losing to competitors or to “We’ll do nothing”, more technical training and sales process training will be of no help. To fix sales problems, one needs to address the specifics of sales skills and how to apply them in real world predicaments.

## Part Two

### Section Four

#### How Do Salespeople Actually Become Enabled?

Sales hinge on what a salesperson says and does in specific situations. But no one is born knowing how to engage, inspire, and guide strangers into buying complex new solutions that will bring change into their company.

To positively affect sales revenue:

- More prospects have to enter the pipeline.
- More have to move as quickly as possible through the middle of the sales cycle without getting bogged down by FUD (fear, uncertainty and doubt).
- More prospects have to move successfully through competitive challenges and past specific objections.



Most technology salespeople only know one way to sell — this is why teaching tactics for real-world selling situations delivers impact on sales wins.

- Fewer surprises must occur that stop the sales cycle cold and fewer phrases like: “We’ll do nothing.” must be heard.

To enable a sales force to create more revenue, they must be taught the steps and skills — not merely the process — it takes to create more buyers. Otherwise, where will they learn specific tactics for selling your solution competitively?

*Tactics directly impact top line sales because they directly impact the customer. Tactics are what the customer experiences; winning competitively is all about knowledge and use of tactics.*

**Competitive Tactics Training** teaches best practices for your specific sale and its competitive selling situations:

- Best ways to get more prospects into the sales cycle and wanting to become customers.
- Numerous ways to replace customer caution (or a competitor’s FUD) with confidence and desire to move towards a purchase.
- Proven best ways to overcome price and other competitive challenges, especially those that can derail the sale in the final stages of a sales cycle.

In working with many hundreds of salespeople, we have confirmed that most technology salespeople only know a single way to sell. They know no other tactics to use in difficult situations. This is why learning new approaches opens many doors for them.

For example, most salespeople only have one approach if a sale slows down. If that single approach does not work, they know no other tactics to employ. Once they learn new ways to get slow-movers moving again, they have more options. (And they can now apply it to all existing prospects, which is one reason why tactics training has such an immediate impact on sales revenue.)

Similarly, when salespeople learn several new approaches to respond against

aggressive competitors, they win more frequently, and can prevent the problem from arising in future opportunities.

With a broader range of effective approaches, the current sales force now has more options -- they can effectively ‘outsell’ themselves and win in situations that they previously would have lost. This is a dramatic evolution, one with positive and measurable impact on sales revenue.

### Section Five

#### Advantages of Teaching Tactics

*Competitive selling tactics are not scripts to learn or tricky closes. Tactics are approaches that are respectful of the customer and of high integrity.*

They are based in real-world situations and include insights, words, phrases, approaches and actions which are designed to resonate with the prospect and motivate them to move forward with your sale.

For example, what does a salesperson do when challenged with a competitive objection (“You cost too much”, “We’re going to wait to compare with a competitor’s upcoming version”, “We’ve heard complaints that...”, etc.)? Repeating one’s demo or value proposition will be of little use. Instead that salesperson should have a variety of tactics from which to choose, depending on their insights into that customer’s situation.

One tactic might involve posing a thought provoking question that gets the prospect considering the long range impact. Another could use examples from existing customers, in ways that defuse that competitor’s allegations. Yet another might be how to turn an obstacle around, step by step, so the prospect dismisses it themselves.

As mentioned above, most salespeople only know one way to sell, typically by

informing. Tactics are integral to selling -- they are instrumental in helping salespeople connect with cold prospects, sell big concepts, and close a sale that involves managers they will never meet.

Managers we have interviewed, at technology companies ranging from industry leaders to start-ups, consider the following among the most important advantages of tactics training:

1. Salespeople who know more tactics have more ways to win over competitors.
2. Tactics training is measurable and the impact attributable both quantitatively and qualitatively.
3. Since there are no new complicated steps or grids to learn, tactics can be used immediately for all solutions.
4. Tactics leverage other training investments, fitting seamlessly with any sales process. They do not disrupt the process -- only improve it.

#### Section Six

### How to Deliver Measurable Results from Sales Training

Competitive selling tactics training delivers training with direct impact on customers and selling situations. Because it is specific, the impact is clear and unambiguous. And because of its 'Learn Today, Use Tomorrow' nature, measurable impact can begin immediately.

“Tactics directly impact top line sales because they directly impact the customer.”

“...because of its 'Learn Today, Use Tomorrow' nature, tactics training can begin making measurable impact immediately.”

Because tactics training addresses customer-facing situations, results can span many areas including:

- Dramatically improved top line sales
- Sales leads from new markets
- A fuller pipeline
- Installed base expansion
- Reduction of stalled and 'dead' accounts
- A faster sales cycle
- Fewer price cuts and discounts
- Larger individual sales
- Fewer sales lost to “Thanks, but we’ll do nothing.”
- Fewer surprises at the end of the sales cycle

Typically, a technology company has already identified the key obstacles that frustrate their direct and channel salespeople. They may have already prepared web sites filled with competitive research and advice. By teaching tactics, salespeople learn insights and the best ways to use such tools to make an impact on busy strangers and to win over competitors

### How to Measure Results From Your Sales Enablement Investment

If one is considering an investment in sales training, the desired results are typically already well known. It may be one of the results mentioned above or it could be a special situation, such as your company has acquired another and you need to keep sales momentum and improve both old and new sales teams' competitive selling skills. Or it might be that your current team is no longer delivering adequate sales results in your traditional product space.

Because tactics training is not a generic process, specific needs can be addressed, problem areas can be scrutinized, approaches and responses can be developed and taught -- and results measured for all to see.

Whatever your sales enablement goals, tactics training can help you achieve measurable results.

The chart on the following page offers some examples of results and the tactics that can be taught to achieve those results. Most importantly, it shows how the results of competitive selling tactics can be measured.

#### Section Seven

### Summary

Top line sales revenue is improved by creating more customers, more effectively and more often. To effect such improvement requires training in tactics for competitive selling. Tactics directly impact top line sales because they directly impact the customer -- they are what the customer experiences. Tactics are what they respond to and why they decide to purchase.

Product and process training are important investments, as a technical infrastructure and a management control system respectively. They should not be expected to positively impact top line revenue; that is not what they were designed to do. Only competitive tactics training can result in improved communication, problem solving skills, interpersonal or collaboration skills or even a deeper buyer understanding -- skills and knowledge critical to successful sales.

It should be noted that designing and delivering tactics training requires an intimate and objective understanding of the channel, and both the sales process and the customer's buying process and perspective. Without these it will not be of practical value to the salespeople or towards increasing revenue. This is why to have the greatest impact, Competitive Selling Tactics training programs are customized -- tailored and tuned to your

goals and competitive challenges -- and to what customers are hearing from your competitors.

All technology salespeople get product training and a sales process to follow. They want to win and are already doing everything they know how. To gain an advantage over the competition, they have to know more about the customer's view and the best ways to reach, influence and advance them. They do not need generalities; they need specifics on what to say and do -- and when and how to do it. Only by knowing more approaches for real-world competitive situations can the same people bring in more sales revenue.

Competitive tactics training offers technology companies a clear path to increased sales as it provides these proven sales skills and delivers quantifiable, *measurable* results – finally – from your sales enablement.

**About the Authors**

*For over two decades, Janette Racicot and Ken Wax have helped technology companies by teaching tactics to their direct and channel sales teams. Clients include IBM, Microsoft and many other well known technology companies.*

*Competitive Selling Tactics Workshops are the first set of training products that leverage their decades of successful techniques, tools and approaches.*

*Ken Wax has taught sales tactics to technology salespeople in over a dozen countries and has written numerous of magazine articles on the subject.*

*Prior to founding Total Quality Selling in 1992, Mr. Wax held senior sales management positions at Lotus Development, Graphic Communications, Ingram, and Software Arts.*

*Janette Racicot has led channel and marketing programs on five continents for clients including IBM, Progress Software, Applix and Microsoft, and has written over a dozen articles on best-practices for training industry magazines.*

*Prior to founding Racicot & Associates in 1992, Ms. Racicot spent 11 years with Digital Equipment, followed by positions with smaller software and consulting companies that included field sales, product management and market research.*

*More about the authors and Competitive Selling Tactics Workshops can be found at [www.competitivesellingtactics.com](http://www.competitivesellingtactics.com).*

Desired Sales Result	Increase Pipeline	Prevent Stalled Opportunities	Close More Sales, More Quickly
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of Accounts in 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr of Cycle</li> <li>• Quality of Each Account</li> <li>• Contact's Level and Authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of Accounts Aged Over Desired # of Quarters</li> <li>• # of Meetings w/o Advance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time to Close</li> <li>• Number of Wins</li> <li>• Timing and Level of Discounting</li> </ul>
Competitive Selling Tactics to Achieve Result	Teach How To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain and intrigue about your company and its advantages in under a minute</li> <li>• Guide prospects past early challenges</li> <li>• Enable their prospects to sell others</li> <li>• Influence 'unreachable' decision makers</li> <li>• A guide to senior executives and how to sell to them</li> </ul>	Teach How To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sell more than one way in a specific situation</li> <li>• Sell in mixed meetings</li> <li>• Advance the sales despite roadblocks and competitive challenges</li> <li>• Prevent stalls from checklist challenges</li> <li>• Reduce FUD and advance to a win</li> </ul>	Teach How To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent 'Do Nothing' Decisions</li> <li>• Advance beyond objections like: "You cost too much"</li> <li>• Sell multiple ways in specific situations</li> <li>• Enable contact if committee is unreachable</li> <li>• Prevent emergencies and competitive challenges early in the sales cycle (that undermine getting to this stage)</li> </ul>

Unlike product and sales process training, competitive selling tactics training has a direct impact on customers and measurable impact on sales revenue. Salespeople who know more tactics have more options.