

TURBO-CHARGING PASSION TO DRIVE SALES PERFORMANCE

Integrity Solutions Research Brief



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I. Executive Summary

What's the most overlooked component of salesperson development and coaching – and one that helps top performers drive up to 20% more in sales performance?

New research from Integrity Solutions and the Sales Management Association has a clear answer: increasing your sales force's self-belief, motivation—and, specifically, the drive to achieve.

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A new survey of 200+ sales organizations reveals a primary factor that turns traditional sales development on its head: *Achievement Drive* contributes as much or more to a salesperson's performance as sales skills or specific product knowledge.

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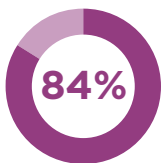
This brief unpacks the most important data in the survey and details why this is such a critical issue today, with implications across the business spectrum. What's more, it points to how organizations can shift their sales development to join the ranks of top performers focused on igniting passion and Achievement Drive for sales team excellence.

Defining Achievement Drive

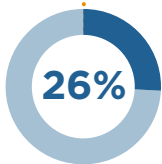
What do we mean by the term *Achievement Drive*? Simply put: Achievement Drive is the energy released when people are deeply motivated by and passionate about what they're doing, have a great attitude, and believe in their abilities to reach new heights and accomplish key goals. It's an inner fire and determination that pushes them to go beyond the sometimes self-imposed barriers that hold others back.

II. Fast Facts

What do successful sales organizations do to continually stay ahead of the competition and drive more profitable growth? Our survey found that Achievement Drive contributes to a 20% increase in sales, but the vast majority of companies aren't effective at developing it within their people.



believe that **Achievement Drive matters** as much or more to sales success vs. selling skills or product knowledge.



consider themselves **very effective** at developing Achievement Drive in their people.



The **increase in sales** that organizations get when they effectively focus on developing Achievement Drive

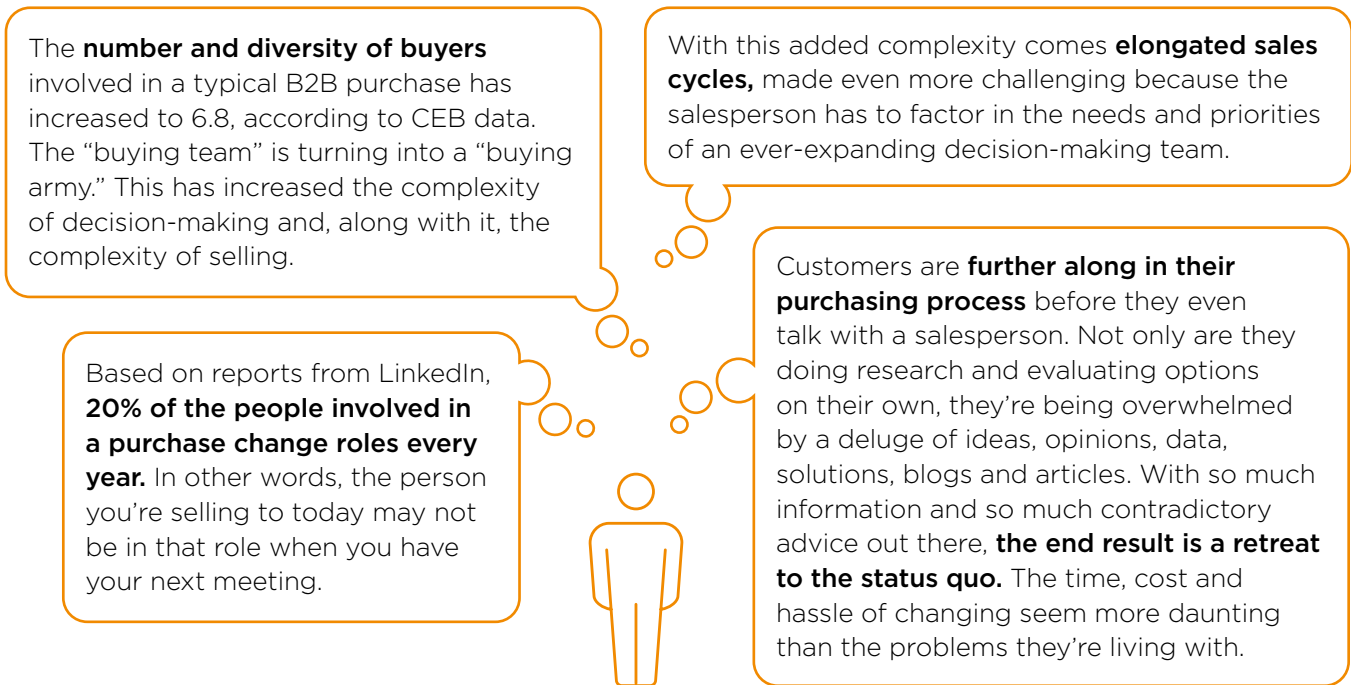
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There's a significant gap between what organizations are saying is important and how they're training their people to succeed. However, the most important number is

III. Why Now? Trends and Macro Business Issues

Perhaps the most important issue affecting sales performance today is the concern over lagging sales quotas. According to CSO Insights, only 51% of salespeople across all industries made quota in 2017, down from 53% in 2016, 55.8% in the previous year, and a steady decline from 63% in 2011.

But low quota achievement isn't the only challenge sales organizations are facing today. Other important trends and macro issues that impact sales performance are being driven by customers, who are dramatically changing the way they purchase a company's solutions. For example:



Against this backdrop, sales organizations are being forced to turn a critical eye to performance and the factors that will help them achieve their goals. This includes the need to:

- Attract, recruit and retain high performers
- Create market differentiation, especially in fields like financial services, medical device products and similar industries where commoditization is a challenge
- Increase wallet share by deepening client relationships and shifting sales mindsets from “what product do I want to sell/feel comfortable selling” to being able to ask questions and truly understand client needs
- Create a culture of engagement that ignites people's passion around a purpose bigger than themselves (especially important for attracting Millennials)
- Help customers navigate through the ocean of information and noise they are being bombarded with, and make effective decisions that will help them achieve their most important goals

In this more demanding and complex selling environment, organizations can't afford to make assumptions about what works and what doesn't. They need a better understanding of what really makes a successful salesperson.

IV. Key Research Findings

What's the one thing that separates successful salespeople from all the rest? It's the million-dollar question on the minds of executives across industries today, particularly as new competitors enter and disrupt existing markets, and the selling environment grows increasingly complex.

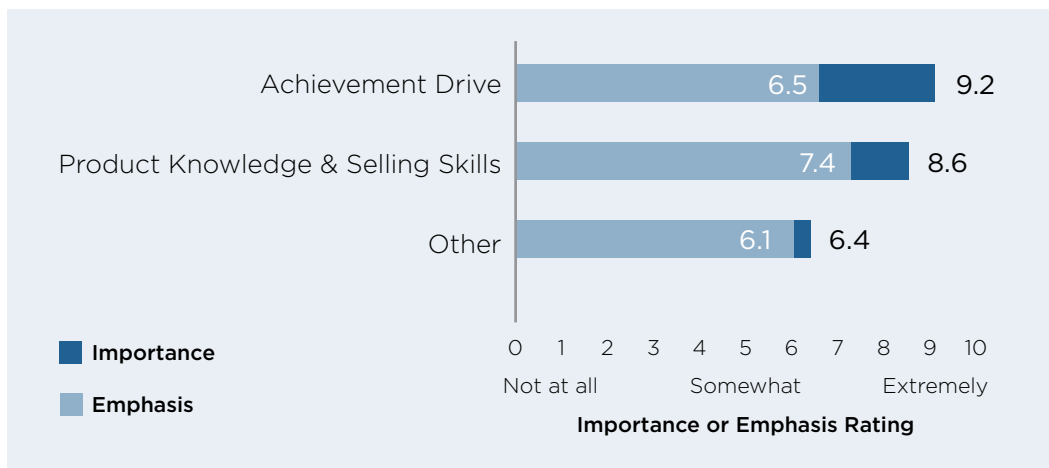
When we partnered with the Sales Management Association to survey leaders over 200 sales organizations, we set out to answer two primary questions that are important to every firm looking to build a robust sales force:

1. What qualities separate excellent from average sales performers?
2. How do you continually develop those traits for maximum results?

According to the respondents in our survey, the salesperson's "Achievement Drive" is the key determinant of success, contributing as much or more to their performance than sales skills or product knowledge.

But here's what surprised us: Despite the fact that 84% of respondents rated Achievement Drive as key, only 26% said they were effective at developing Achievement Drive in their sales training efforts.

What Matters Most vs. What Gets Attention in Training



Top performers, on the other hand, pay attention to these success factors. Our study found that the companies that effectively emphasize Achievement Drive in their sales training and development efforts outperform the rest of the field by 20%.

Training’s Effectiveness in Contributing to Business Outcomes: What Works



In comparing the companies that said they are effective in training specific salesperson capabilities with their peers who are less effective in training the same topics, we found positive correlation between training effectiveness and an organization’s sales achievement. All topics researched showed some positive correlation, and overall sales performance variance ranged between 5% and 20% improvement.

Training’s Effectiveness in Contributing to Business Outcomes: A Deeper Dive

Sales Achievement Correlated With Salesperson Training Topic Effectiveness

Salesperson Training Topic	Percentage of Firms in “High Performing” Effectiveness Category	Their Average Firm Sales Objective Achievement	Other Firms’ Sales Objective Achievement	Variance
Achievement Drive	26%	4.98	4.15	+20%
Deep Belief In What Is Sold	32%	4.84	4.15	+17%
Confidence	28%	4.83	4.19	+15%
Collaborative	21%	4.84	4.25	+14%
Deliver Customer Insights	25%	4.79	4.23	+13%
Adaptive Communication	19%	4.79	4.27	+12%
Confidently Asks For Commitment	25%	4.62	4.29	+08%
View Of “Selling” Aligned With Personal Value	26%	4.59	4.29	+07%
Customer-Based Solution Development	38%	4.53	4.28	+06%
Customer Knowledge	37%	4.52	4.28	+05%

Organizations effective in developing their salespeople’s Achievement Drive showed a 20% improvement in sales performance over those that said they’re less effective at training in this area. Two other topics also showed correlation with improved growth of 15% or more—training that focuses on a “deep belief in what is sold” (17% improvement) and confidence (15% improvement), both of which are closely connected to Achievement Drive.

V. About Achievement Drive

Sales Training and the So-Called “Soft Stuff”

As the survey reveals, most sales training is missing the key focus on Achievement Drive, and many organizations have the lackluster sales results to show for it.

The question is, if companies know how important Achievement Drive is—as our survey also showed—then why aren't they focusing on it?

There are plenty of ways leaders rationalize focusing on skill and product training, even when they agree that attitudes and Achievement Drive play a bigger role in performance. The top four reasons we heard in our study were:

Skills and product training are just simpler to deliver and measure.

We expect people to have this already when they're hired.

We've never done this type of development before in our organization.

The subject matter is too personal for corporate training or coaching.

In our conversations with sales leaders, we've also heard several recurring themes. For one, **the “soft stuff” is hard**. It's a lot easier to focus salespeople on the basic “blocking and tackling” of product information, selling techniques, sales scripts, and managing numbers and activities. They can't quite pin down what Achievement Drive really is, how to measure it and, most important, how to develop it.

The question, **“Can it really be developed?”** comes up often as well. Many believe that Achievement Drive is a personality attribute rather than a learned skill. So they expect people to come to the job with it—or struggle along without it.

But in fact, Achievement Drive is something that all of us have within us and can learn to expand. Like a musical ability, everyone is born with different degrees of Achievement Drive. Effective coaching and training bring the most out of everyone.

The good news is, top performers in our study have busted many of these commonly held myths about Achievement Drive. But these myths are only part of the problem.

Take a Page from the Top Performers: Developing Achievement Drive

Our survey shows that the most successful salespeople are driven by a set of attitudes, beliefs and values that inspires them to achieve more—for their customers, their organization and themselves. By connecting knowledge, skills and values in your sales training and coaching efforts, you can empower all of your salespeople to unlock their own personal leverage points of success.

It may be tougher to get at attitudes, beliefs and Achievement Drive, but those factors are the “turbo chargers” for most people's success.

Top Performers Focus on These 3 Critical Conversations

So, what advice can we take away from the lessons of the top-performing companies in our study?

We learned that there are three critical conversations every salesperson must focus on for the organization to consistently realize its growth goals:

1 The conversation I have with my customers: In these conversations, the salesperson focuses on issues such as:

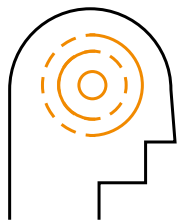
- Interacting in ways the customer finds valuable
- Helping customers gain clarity about their problems, needs and decision-making process
- Identifying the best solutions to help them achieve their goals
- Engaging customers in conversations rather than giving them presentations



This is where the important training around selling skills, account strategy and product knowledge falls. It's also where many sales training approaches begin and end.

2 The conversation I have with myself: Those moments of reflection, inner belief and personal values are sometimes seen as “intangibles,” but the impact on performance is quite real. This is where training focused around Achievement Drive comes into play. To understand this more clearly, consider this:

Every salesperson unconsciously asks and silently answers these questions as part of that internal dialogue:

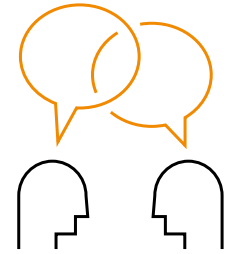


- *Who am I?*
- *What's possible for me to sell?*
- *What's not possible for me to sell?*
- *What's possible for me to earn?*
- *What's not possible for me to earn?*
- *What level of people am I able to call on and sell?*
- *What level of people am I not able to call on and sell?*
- *What level of life rewards do I think I deserve to enjoy?*
- *What level of life rewards do I not think I deserve to enjoy?*

Because sales is traditionally considered to be all about confidence, sales professionals rarely take the time to really think about these questions and their influence on their performance. However, silent answers reveal deep beliefs, which produce actual selling behaviors. Whatever salespeople's unconscious beliefs are, their sales will be consistent. They'll sell what they deeply believe is possible for them to sell.

To improve performance, training and coaching efforts have to focus on stretching that area of the possible. These initiatives can't be limited to just techniques, product information and activity management.

3 The conversation I have with my coach: One of the key determining factors for growth is coaching. However, when and if sales coaching actually happens, it's nearly always focused on how to improve the first conversation—a salesperson's ability to interact effectively with the customer. It rarely addresses the other critical conversation, the one that salespeople are having all the time—with themselves.



In other words, to expand Achievement Drive, coaching efforts have to be aligned as part of an overall training strategy. If sales coaches don't recognize the connection or understand how pivotal those inner conversations are, they won't be able to help their salespeople break through the self-limiting beliefs that keep them from fully releasing their own personal Achievement Drive.

VI. Turbo-Charge Your Sales Training

What can we learn from the research about turbo-charging your sales training? Here's a five-step action plan for upping the game on your sales team's performance:

- 1 COACHING: Equip managers to coach their people.** This doesn't mean only discussing pipeline, accounts and progress to quota. Those are important, but they're not coaching. Effective coaching not only improves your sales team's skillset but also their mindset. It helps your people tap into and unlock their Achievement Drive and enables them to reconnect with the inner fire they need to push past emotional resistance and elevate their results.

For effective coaching to happen, two components need to be in place: (1) Managers need a solid coaching process they can trust, and (2) they must have something to coach to. In other words, if coaches are going to help draw out the potential in their people, what does that look like?
- 2 GOALS: Provide your sales teams with a structured platform to set personal and professional goals that will motivate them to higher levels of achievement.** Many top-level salespeople are driven by money, but this has to be about more than just money. The process must equip them to plan their *strategy* for achieving their goals, *build belief* that the goals are achievable, *develop additional skills or strengths* required, *manage progress*, and *instill accountability*.
- 3 SKILLS: When someone knows, in their gut, that they are creating value for others, their Achievement Drive increases.** And what clients value most of all in today's information-overloaded business environment is someone who can help them clarify their problems, needs, opportunities and decision-making. They're looking for a consultative, collaborative conversation, not a presentation focused on the company's solutions. This means your salespeople need the client-facing skills to help your customers gain clarity around their current situation and how that contrasts with their desired situation. They'll create additional value by encouraging customers to talk about what they'll gain by narrowing that gap and helping them recognize the risks of sticking with the status quo. Equipping your sales teams to have this conversation is an increasingly essential focus for sales training.
- 4 PURPOSE: Help salespeople find purpose in what they're selling.** To light that inner fire, salespeople need to see the connection between what they're doing and how it's improving people's lives. Every organization exists to serve a mission and purpose that provides value. Until your salespeople truly understand the difference they can make, they won't be able to connect the dots for their customers.
- 5 AWARENESS: Increase awareness of the importance of all three conversations in Section V.** Most salespeople will naturally focus on the customer conversation while giving little thought to the other two. All three are critical, and it takes a concentrated effort to examine, gain insight and benefit from the internal conversations and the conversations with their coach.

VII. Top Three Frequently Asked Questions

As we've presented this data to sales and business leaders, here are a few frequently asked questions:

Aren't Achievement Drive and motivation innate—you either have them or you don't?

Achievement Drive and motivation lie within every individual. So while it's true that you can't motivate someone—that has to come from within—you can create the conditions and insight to help them unleash their inner motivation and strengthen that drive to achieve.

Can't we just hire for it—recruit people who have a strong desire to achieve?

The key is to develop and expand a salesperson's Achievement Drive through a combination of training, coaching and a culture that gives people a strong sense of purpose and passion for their work. Even those salespeople who come to the job with a healthy desire to achieve can continue to expand it and break through to new levels of success. And just as important to keep in mind, without supportive training, coaching and culture, the drive of those high achievers can easily fall off.

How can you assess if you're moving the needle on Achievement Drive?

Improving in this critical area can be measured by tangible progress in each of the five areas discussed in Section VI above.

1. **COACHING:** How often are your managers coaching their people beyond discussions about numbers and accounts? How effectively are managers asking questions that build trust and help your salespeople generate additional enthusiasm for achieving their goals?
2. **GOALS:** To what degree do your people have clarity around their most important goals? Do they have a repeatable process, skills and accountability to help them achieve them?
3. **SKILLS:** How well are your salespeople engaging customers in collaborative conversations that improve clarity about their problems, needs, opportunities and decision-making? Do your people display confidence in these essential client-facing skills?
4. **PURPOSE:** Can each salesperson, or anyone in your organization for that matter, clearly state how your company and your solutions improve people's lives? What is their level of passion for this mission?
5. **AWARENESS:** Does everyone clearly understand the importance of the three conversations critical to their success? Have they developed a plan to improve in each one?

VIII. Final Thoughts



Achievement Drive involves the whole person and, in many ways, the whole organization. It's as much about your sales managers and your overall culture as it is your salespeople. Managers must believe in the potential of their people and their ability to break through existing performance levels. They must also understand, believe in and commit to ongoing coaching. At the same time, if your organization isn't giving people a reason to get excited about their work and a mission, product and solution they can find purpose and passion in, you'll struggle to release the Achievement Drive necessary to overcome today's challenges—if not today, then soon.

ABOUT INTEGRITY SOLUTIONS

Integrity Solutions, the performance experts, equips sales and customer service teams to rise up and lead by building trusted customer relationships with integrity at their core. As the partner of choice for values-driven organizations, the firm specializes in innovative sales, service and coaching training solutions that fuel performance, grow talent, lift up customers and elevate leaders. Our experience spans over 50 years, 130 countries and industries including healthcare, financial services, manufacturing, energy and utilities, agriculture and more. Integrity has been consistently recognized as a Top 20 Sales Training Company by both Selling Power and Training Industry, Inc. in recent years, as well as received multiple Stevie Awards for Sales Training and Consulting excellence.

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