

7 Must-Ask Questions When Evaluating a Sales Training Provider

CONTENTS

Introduction

- 1 Does the training fit your culture and align with your values?
- 2 Does the approach resonate with your salespeople, not just with your executives?
- 3 Does the training experience integrate seamlessly with your systems?
- 4 Is the methodology human-centered and focused on building relationships?
- 5 Does the training focus on the primary drivers of sales success?
- 6 How are sales managers integrated into the training experience?
- 7 How will the provider work with you to measure success?

Technology is transforming the role of the sales professional to a new level. In a world where AI, automation, and other technological advances are increasing access to information, streamlining processes and leveling the playing field in many ways, the human element is fast becoming one of your most important differentiators.

At the same time, the buying journey is growing more [complex](#) and slowing down considerably—sometimes stalling out completely—as client organizations grapple with market uncertainty and economic volatility. [Research](#) shows that 53% of sales professionals say it's gotten harder to sell in recent years, and 57% of sales leaders and managers say competition has increased.

All of these realities underscore the importance of **sales training as a strategic necessity**. The external environment is constantly moving and changing. Salespeople at all stages of their careers need new skills as well as the motivation and mindset to navigate these challenges with confidence and adapt to evolving customer expectations.

Sales training is an investment—in your people and your business.

Too often, though, companies are left to wonder what they really got from that investment, because the training hasn't translated into consistent, tangible results. By designing training that reinforces alignment internally *and* externally, you create an environment where people are empowered to grow, stay engaged, and drive consistent results.

The payoff? Higher productivity, stronger retention, and improved outcomes for your business and customers alike. Sales training doesn't have to be a [black hole](#)—it can be a powerful catalyst for congruence, confidence, and connection. It all starts with ensuring your training approach honors what matters most to your people.

The stakes are high with this pivotal investment. To maximize your return, here are seven must-ask questions to consider as you evaluate different sales training providers.



Sales professionals say it's gotten **harder to sell** in recent years.



Sales leaders and managers say **competition has increased**.



Does the training fit your culture and align with your values?

Most companies put a great deal of intention into developing core values. They're often centered around an organization's commitment to principles like collaboration, honesty, transparency, customer obsession, and "doing the right thing." These are values customers are looking for in the organizations they choose to do business with, and they're also what attract employees to the company. Today's top salespeople want to work for people and companies that align with their own personal values and operate with integrity and excellence.

Words aren't enough, though. The real test and proof of values comes down to how people interact on a day-to-day basis and go about doing their jobs. If your sales training provider adopts an approach or methodology that contradicts these values in any way, it will send mixed messages to your salespeople about what the company really believes and how it expects employees to behave. That can ultimately damage your reputation, both internally and with clients.

This is why culture fit is critical. Your sales professionals are the public face and representatives of what your business stands for. The training concepts should represent your culture and help bring those values to life, through sales models and approaches that are rooted in honest, ethical, customer-focused selling practices.

To determine cultural fit, evaluate potential training providers through the lens of your company's values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations. How will the solution further—or inhibit—the culture? Does the selling approach reflect positively on who you are as an organization? And if it doesn't, what are the broader implications of that? If you wouldn't want your employees to have to deal with pushy, manipulative or condescending behavior by a colleague or vendor, you don't want to choose a sales training approach that promotes such tactics as a way of doing business.

TIP: Look for a provider that offers a values-based approach that aligns with your cultural expectations and reinforces it through positive behavior change. Training that creates a common language to integrate values across every customer-facing corner of the organization, whether those customers are external or internal, will help you embed that values-based selling mindset as a cultural touchstone.

2

Does the approach resonate with your salespeople, not just with your executives?

While executives and decision-makers are often the ones evaluating training providers, it's important to consider the offerings from the perspective of the end user. Sales training is only going to be effective if your reps buy into the model and are willing to put the concepts into practice. That means it must be an approach your salespeople connect with and will be comfortable applying in the real world. In other words, it must align with their beliefs, values, and motivations. This is one way to ensure they'll actually apply it in their everyday interactions.

As you evaluate various providers, consider that your reps are going to naturally be drawn to a program that reinforces their value as a sales professional and makes sales a job they can feel good about performing. Most high-performing salespeople pride themselves on being advocates for their clients, so pay attention to how the provider defines selling. Is their approach focused on doing something *to* customers, or doing something *with and for* customers?

These nuances matter. When sales representatives adopt a mindset of creating value for customers, they're more likely to enjoy and even anticipate the sales process. This mindset shift is a major contributor to their success. In a job that's filled with ups and downs, delays and rejections, that sense of purpose keeps top salespeople energized and striving to achieve more. This is one of the reasons they're more likely to connect with and apply a customer-value-focused approach. It makes them feel good about what they're doing, *and* it helps them be more successful.

TIP: Don't just take the sales training provider's word for it. There are numerous external organizations that evaluate the effectiveness of different sales training providers and their approaches, through [top provider](#) lists, [award](#) recognition and vetted [directories](#) and [review platforms](#). Beyond that, some of the most telling external validation often comes from client and participant feedback.

3

Does the training experience integrate seamlessly with your systems?

Today's sales organizations are making significant investments to modernize and enhance their systems to take full advantage of the latest advances in technology. You should expect the same up-to-date, scalable, and integrated experience with your sales training program and platform.

From engagement-prompting features like gamification, on-demand access, and structured learning journeys, to performance improvement tracking through smart data, analytics and reporting, a modern sales training platform not only lifts and sustains learning outcomes—it will increase the credibility of the overall experience with your sales reps and their leaders. Digital native employees have little patience for clunky, outdated interfaces and will be less likely to spend time on the materials if it means digging through a complicated or inaccessible user interface (UI).

The system should also be designed to facilitate continuous learning throughout the flow of work. This is a vital component of any training implementation since research has shown that upwards of [93% of sales training content is forgotten within three weeks](#). No matter how great the content is, without a robust platform and well-designed approach for tracking, measuring, and reinforcing behaviors, people will forget nearly all of what they've heard and revert to old habits. A provider that treats structured follow-up as an afterthought or an add-on isn't going to be able to deliver a full and lasting return on the training investment.



Sales training content that is forgotten within three weeks.

TIP: In addition to offering a compatible, feature-rich [Learning Management System \(LMS\)](#), a training provider should be able to explain how their product development process stays current with evolving needs, capabilities and compliance requirements. One sign the provider is keeping a close eye on user experience and client integration needs is an active focus on innovation and continuous improvement through feedback from clients, which is then used to inform the product roadmap.

4

Is the methodology human-centered and focused on building relationships?

In a tech-saturated world, the human element is your biggest differentiator. But there are many different ways of approaching the human-to-human interaction. Clients are looking for a partner who has their best interests at heart, not someone who talks down to them, pushes them into decisions they aren't comfortable with or whose primary focus is just to get the deal done. Aggressive, adversarial, or manipulative sales tactics and rehearsed pitches simply aren't effective in today's environment.

More successful approaches present selling as a win-win proposition, where both the seller and the buyer are working together through a discovery process toward a shared goal of identifying and finding the best solution to the customer's needs. Instead of focusing on just executing a transaction, this kind of customer-centered mindset builds trust and sets the stage for long-term relationships, more business opportunities, and more referrals. It also helps the salesperson stay connected to the broader purpose and impact of what they're doing, which is highly self-motivating especially with the next generation of sellers.

In the most productive sales conversations, the customer does the majority of the talking. But that doesn't mean the salesperson is just sitting there, waiting for something to happen. Look for training that will give your reps a disciplined process for building rapport, asking compelling questions, and listening to truly understand what the customer's challenges and goals are.

TIP: You can often find clues about the provider's point of view in the way the role of the sales professional is defined. Is it about taking control of the sales conversation and leading the customer down the path to your solution? Or is it about being genuinely curious and working together to find the *right* solution for the customer in a consultative manner? Prospects today are well aware of—and generally averse to—manipulation tactics and the hard-sell approach.

5

Does the training focus on the primary drivers of sales success?

It may seem like an obvious question, but there are many myths and misunderstandings about what actually fuels success in sales. Product knowledge and selling skills are important, but a positive view of the sales profession, belief in the product, and genuine desire to create value for customers are ultimately much more influential when it comes succeeding in sales, particularly in a complex environment where sales cycles are lengthening, buying groups are expanding and economic volatility is intensifying the pressure.

This is why at Integrity Solutions we often say **you can't teach people to sell by teaching people to sell**. It's why two people can go through the same training, and one will excel afterwards while the other may flounder. A person's attitudes and beliefs will either enable or prevent them from breaking through barriers (both external and self-imposed) and moving past the inevitable setbacks that come with the territory of being in a sales role.

Sales leaders agree: In one study, [84% of sales leaders](#) said that beliefs (mindset) and values (a general desire to create value for the customer) **are as important as selling skills and product knowledge**. Yet only 26% of sales leaders rated their organization as effective at developing these factors in their reps.

One of the biggest myths is that these mindset-related factors can't be developed—that people either have it or they don't. In fact, attitudes, values, and beliefs can and must be developed to unleash the full potential of your salespeople.

84%

Sales leaders that said **beliefs and values** are as important as selling skills and product knowledge.

yet...

26%

Sales leaders who **rated their organization as effective** at developing these factors in their reps.

TIP: Most sales training addresses the conversations salespeople have with customers. One of the biggest areas of competitive differentiation for your salespeople comes from the conversations they have *with themselves*—about what selling really is, how good they are at it, what matters to them, how good their product is, and how committed they are to the process and required activities. If the training doesn't address these inner factors in a clear and methodical way, sales potential and ROI will be limited.



How are sales managers integrated into the training experience?

Just as sales training can't be a one-and-done event, it also can't be delivered in a vacuum. Managers play a fundamental role in the success of your sales training efforts and the day-to-day performance of your salespeople. If they don't fully understand, believe in, model, and coach to the skills and behaviors, it will be very difficult for the concepts to take hold over the long term.

There are a number of ways a sales training provider can integrate managers into the process. For example, managers should have access to the sales training platform and the ability to track learner engagement and progression at each step of the development journey, including the ability to see what's working, who needs additional support and in what areas.

Coaching is another essential part of the sales training story. Numerous studies have shown that consistent coaching by sales managers leads to a range of positive outcomes, including higher productivity, quota attainment, win rates, sales rep retention, and more. When it comes to integration of training, it's important to ensure there is a way to equip managers with the complementary coaching skills, tools, and mindset to support and reinforce what their sales reps are learning.

Often managers say they don't have enough time to coach, when the reality is they don't have the skills or the understanding of what it really means to coach. Skilled coaching—along with a commitment to doing it regularly—is key for uncovering and addressing the inner factors that can get in the way of a rep's success, no matter how much training they've been through.

TIP: Most coaching, when and if it happens, is directed at helping salespeople improve their conversations with their customers, focusing on areas like sales skills, account planning, sales call planning, etc. Managers also need to learn how to coach to those pivotal internal conversations. Look for training providers that emphasize coaching not just to the numbers but also to the motivation, attitudes, beliefs, and values that are the critical underlying drivers of sales performance.



How will the provider work with you to measure success?

What constitutes successful training outcomes is a question that requires input from multiple stakeholders before training has even begun. Often the level of clarity and alignment needed to measure outcomes is absent from initial scoping discussions. Without that clarity established upfront, the “outcomes horse” has left the barn, so to speak. **This is why training frequently ends up being evaluated based on immediate feedback from learners about their reaction to the training and/or their immediate knowledge of what was presented.** While this information can be interesting, it tells us precious little about impact or ROI.

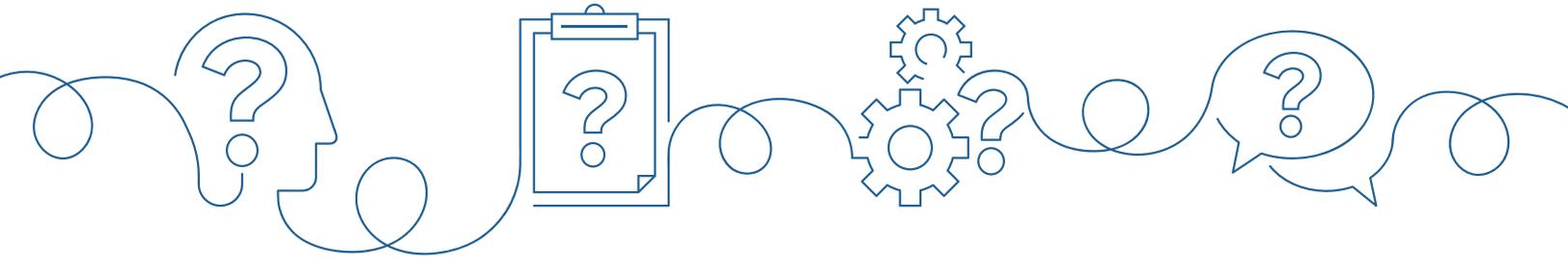
When it comes to sales training, there are three main areas where you should be able to see tangible results:

- 1 **Financial** (e.g., revenue growth, profitability of deals, number of products per customer and account penetration);
- 2 **Performance** (e.g., quota achievement as well as predictive measures such as pipeline health, pipeline value, number of deals in the pipeline and pipeline velocity);
- 3 and **Behavioral** (e.g., tangible, observable behaviors that are tied to the skills they’re learning).

A training provider that is serious about helping you measure outcomes will work with you at the outset to determine:

- **What does success look like?** It’s tempting to focus on needs and then jump to solutions, but that doesn’t shed much light on desired outcomes. Thinking about what success looks like will shift that discussion toward the future state and outcomes you would associate with success.
- **What are we measuring—impact (behavior), ROI (results) or both?** The effectiveness of sales training can be linked to sales performance in terms of dollars and cents, which can translate fairly easily to ROI. But as noted above, there are also some aspects of training that don’t lend themselves as neatly to ROI, and in those instances, measuring impact offers a more insightful evaluation and a leading indicator of sustainable growth. By helping you differentiate ROI from impact, a training provider can guide the conversation toward what data is going to offer the strongest correlated value and be the most meaningful.

- **How will we collaborate to measure outcomes?** Whether measuring impact, ROI, or both, there must be a willingness and commitment among your stakeholders to share information that extends beyond the immediate learning. You should expect the training provider to acknowledge this need for collaboration and information sharing as a prerequisite of any agreement to measure impact or ROI.



Today's leaders recognize sales training is not optional—it's a sales enablement edge in an environment that is rapidly changing and constantly being disrupted. As digital transformation and AI level the playing field, the human element is *the* differentiator. And that's making the investment in developing and growing sales professionals at all levels even more critical. As you evaluate providers, these questions will help you ensure the training is a true strategic lever and performance multiplier.

Integrity Solutions has been a leader and innovator in the sales training industry for over 50 years. For more information or to see if Integrity Solutions is the best partner for your organization's unique needs, please visit integritysolutions.com/contact-us.

INTEGRITY
Solutions

For more information, contact:

Integrity Solutions, LLC
1801 West End Avenue, Suite 250
Nashville, TN 37203
(615) 385 2246 | (800) 646 8347
IntegritySolutions.com

SellingPower
TOP SALES
TRAINING COMPANIES



ISA
The Association of
Learning Providers
2022 BUSINESS
OF THE YEAR