Top Sales Leadership Challenges & Priorities

3 Sales Enablement Strategies to Drive Success

by Mike Schultz and Erica Stritch

RAIN Group

Executive Summary

Top Sales Leadership Challenges & Priorities 3 Sales Enablement Strategies to Drive Success	**Authors** Mike Schultz and Erica Stritch

Delivering value, making the ROI case, retaining customers, growing accounts, recruiting top talent, forecasting, implementing a sales process, utilizing sales technologies, winning against the competition, developing sales managers, coaching sales teams, generating leads, onboarding, productivity, compensation...

There's no shortage of challenges sales leaders face. It can be difficult to prioritize.
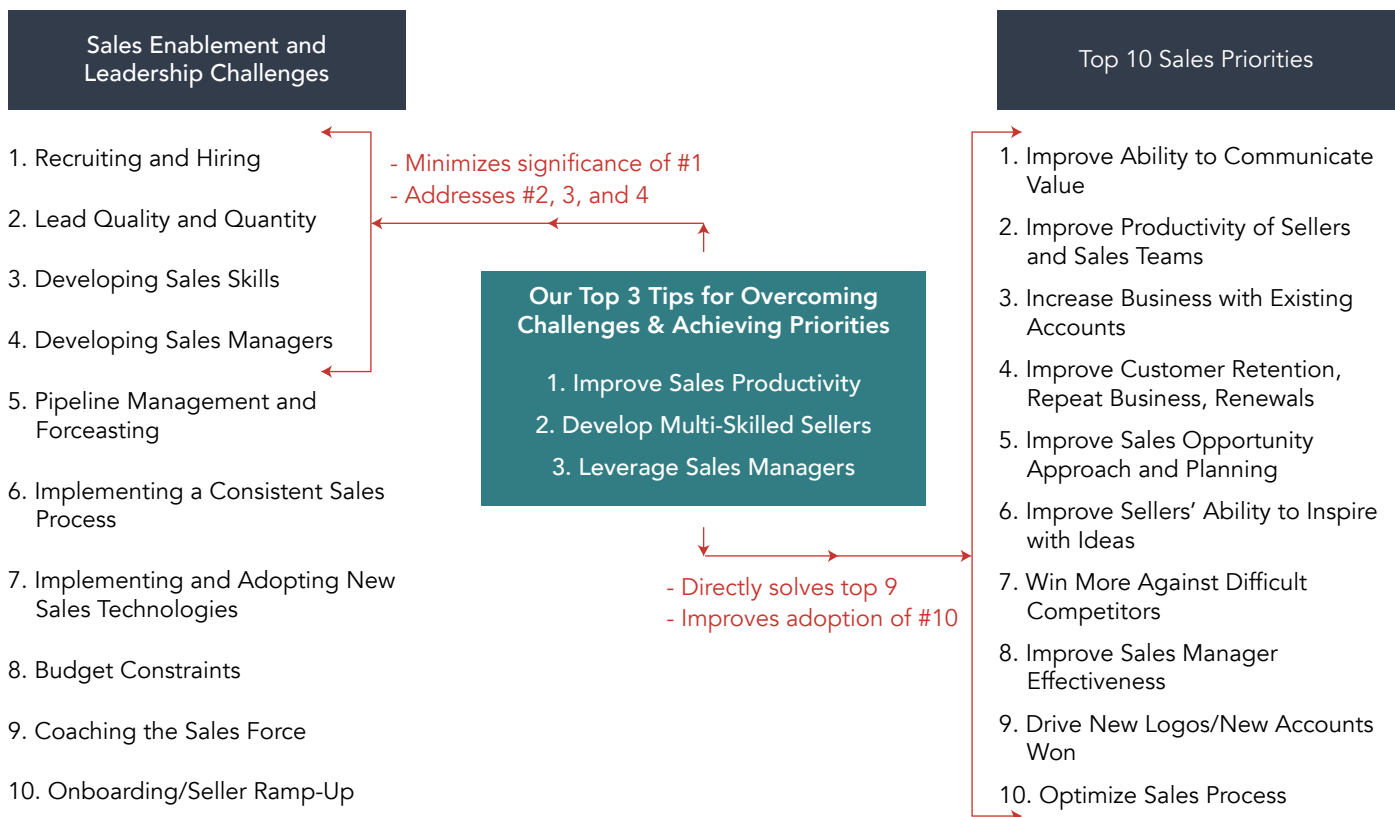
That's why we set out to research the top challenges sales enablement and leaders face today. What are their top priorities? Which are the most difficult to tackle? How should they tackle them?

To find out, we asked 423 sales, enablement, and company leaders these questions.

What bubbled to the top was fascinating. As sales researchers and analysts, it helps us to see not only what *has* changed, but also what *is* changing right now and where the industry is going.

From our research, we were able to identify three sales enablement strategies to help overcome the top challenges and achieve the top priorities.

The Three Sales Enablement Strategies Help to Overcome Top Challenges and Achieve Top Priorities

Sales Enablement and Leadership Challenges

1. Recruiting and Hiring
2. Lead Quality and Quantity
3. Developing Sales Skills
4. Developing Sales Managers
5. Pipeline Management and Forecasting
6. Implementing a Consistent Sales Process
7. Implementing and Adopting New Sales Technologies
8. Budget Constraints
9. Coaching the Sales Force
10. Onboarding/Seller Ramp-Up

- Minimizes significance of #1
- Addresses #2, 3, and 4

Our Top 3 Tips for Overcoming Challenges & Achieving Priorities

1. Improve Sales Productivity
2. Develop Multi-Skilled Sellers
3. Leverage Sales Managers

- Directly solves top 9
- Improves adoption of #10

Top 10 Sales Priorities

1. Improve Ability to Communicate Value
2. Improve Productivity of Sellers and Sales Teams
3. Increase Business with Existing Accounts
4. Improve Customer Retention, Repeat Business, Renewals
5. Improve Sales Opportunity Approach and Planning
6. Improve Sellers' Ability to Inspire with Ideas
7. Win More Against Difficult Competitors
8. Improve Sales Manager Effectiveness
9. Drive New Logos/New Accounts Won
10. Optimize Sales Process

This report describes each of the three strategies and provides ideas for how to implement them.

Introduction

What are the top challenges sales enablement and sales leaders face today? What are their top strategic priorities? Which are most difficult to tackle? How should they tackle them?

To find out we asked 423 sales, enablement, and company leaders these questions.

What bubbled to the top was fascinating. As sales researchers and analysts, it helps us to see not only what *has* changed, but also what *is* changing right now and where the industry is going.

This report contains our findings, including three initiatives that should top sales leader to-do lists.

Top Sales and Enablement Leader Challenges and Priorities

The top four sales challenges are:

1. Recruiting and hiring—finding strong sales talent

2. Lead quality and quantity—generating qualified, sales-ready leads

3. Developing sales skills (driving and winning sales opportunities, driving account growth, consultative selling, filling the pipeline, negotiation, etc.)

4. Developing sales managers

Top 10 Sales Enablement and Leadership Challenges
% Very Challenging

Challenge	%
Recruiting and hiring	52%
Lead quality and quantity	41%
Developing sales skills	40%
Developing sales managers	36%
Pipeline management and forecasting	35%
Implementing a consistent sales process	34%
Implementing and adopting new sales technologies	32%
Budget constraints	29%
Coaching the sales force	27%
Onboarding/seller ramp-up	26%

Not surprisingly, the top sales priorities are largely geared toward tackling the top challenges. Of 16 potential priorities, these 10 bubbled to the top.

Top 10 Sales Priorities
% Very Important

Priority	%
Improve ability to communicate value	70%
Improve productivity of sellers and sales teams	65%
Increase business with existing accounts	64%
Improve customer retention, repeat business, renewals	62%
Improve sales opportunity approach and planning	61%
Improve sellers' ability to inspire with ideas	57%
Win more against difficult competitors	56%
Improve sales manager effectiveness	54%
Drive new logos/new accounts won	53%
Optimize our sales process	53%

Let's start with the top challenge: recruiting and hiring strong sales talent. First, it's a strong economy, so finding top talent is predictably difficult, and second, change is afoot in the world of sales, requiring top sellers to be exceptionally better than they used to be in order to earn the label 'top talent.'

It's not expressive enough to say that 'the world of buying and selling has changed significantly' because it's such an understatement. Here's why:

- Buyers used to expect sellers to explain their product or service. Now they expect sellers to give strategic advice and drive value over-and-above the product.

- There are more buyers involved in every sale. Sellers have to sort through the noise and drive decision making in a way that is more akin to change management than old-style sales opportunity management.

- Prospecting used to be difficult (and it still is), but it was easier to understand. Buy a directory, send direct mail, call, call again, get an appointment, and take it from there. Now it's a Kafkaesque morass of outreach media, technologies, long-term touch sequences, coordination with marketing, email laws and rules, and more. And buyers can review your offerings online, so the bar is higher on what meetings are supposed to be.

- Your competition is under huge pressure to grow their top lines, which means the intensity of other companies' pursuit of your customers is ever-increasing.

- Technology, which always holds the promise of accelerating sales growth, often fails or feels like the new flavor of the month. Still, technology initiatives take up outsized real estate on sellers' radar screens because they're pervasive as organizational priorities, too often serving to barrage sellers with noise rather than support their selling activities.

- The growth of, and increasing sophistication of, purchasing makes selling that much more difficult.

The reality of selling as we head into the roaring '20s? It's going to be a challenge.

Let's say you line up 100 top sellers from the year 2000 and compare them to today's top 100 sellers. The top sellers in 2000 had a fraction of the skills, and not nearly the productive work habits, of top sellers today.

Along with these survey responses, we reviewed almost 400 verbatim answers to the question, "If you could propose and lead one new initiative, and senior leadership would approve and fund it in full, what would that initiative be?"

- A few mentioned recruiting improvement

- Almost no one mentioned compensation

- Almost no one mentioned sales process

- Some mentioned one technology or another

- The most commonly mentioned was sales and sales manager skill development

We've identified three sales enablement strategies you can focus on to address nearly all the top priorities. These suggestions will also tackle three of the top four challenges.

Interestingly, for those of you who can execute these initiatives well, you'll make the top challenge, recruiting top sales talent, much less important because you'll be developing your own top talent (see the graphic on the next page).

The top three recommendations for overcoming sales challenges and achieving priorities are:

1. **Improve Sales Productivity:** Most productivity initiatives center around technology or process. The results we see companies achieve when they focus on the area we outline in this report (and it's not tech or process) get significantly stronger results.

2. **Develop Multi-Skilled Sellers:** Sales skill training is already a priority for many organizations, but flavor of the month is still rampant, long-term adoption of selling method is rare, and measurable results are elusive. We propose new thinking from both the vendor and buyer sides to change this.

3. **Leverage Sales Managers:** Buzz around sales management and coaching training is growing. Approaches for sales manager success still focus on sales opportunity or account strategy coaching, and coaching conversation training is geared to executive coaching rather than what sellers need. Three of the five major roles of a sales coach are largely missing from or, at best, treated anemically in most sales coaching programs.

In following pages, we describe each strategy and provide ideas for how to implement them.

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What About the Sales Tech Stack?

Q: What would most sellers do if you took away their CRM?

A: Buy you dinner.

The world of sales technology has exploded. Most companies have some kind of sales technology initiative on the front burner. We've seen many companies spend a lot of money in sales technology only to see their initiatives fail.

This has been blamed on poor implementation for decades, but we believe another culprit is often to blame: unrealistic expectations of the difference technology can make on sales performance. Even when technology is implemented well, it doesn't fundamentally change the answers to the following three questions:

1. Are our sellers focused on the right things and spending the right amount of time on them?

2. Do sellers have the skills they need across-the-board to succeed in selling?

3. Do our sales managers unleash the potential of their sales teams?

When you have sellers who know what they're doing, focused on the right things in the right way, and getting the support of highly capable sales managers, results soar. Technology can and does aid these processes, but if the people aren't skilled at these already, the technology doesn't help much.

#1: Improve Sales Productivity

The top challenge cited by sales leaders is recruiting and hiring strong sales talent. No surprise there.

What if we told you, however, you could increase your sales productivity by 46% without needing to hire anyone at all?
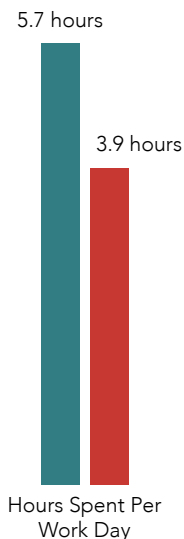
Just marketing puffery, right?

Not necessarily.

For *The Extreme Productivity Benchmark Report*, we studied 2,377 sellers and non-sellers to uncover the behaviors of productive people.

Interestingly, we found that 47% of people waste a great deal of time at work (not a little, not a moderate amount—a *great deal* of time). That's nearly half of your sales force wasting a significant amount of time each day.

RAIN Group's 4 Levels of TIME are:

Level	Description	Action
Level 4: **T**reasured	Time you hold dear	Take some now, maximize for future
Level 3: **I**nvestment	Time that generates outsized return	Increase: prioritize, calendar, maximize
Level 2: **M**andatory	Time you feel you must spend	Minimize/outsource
Level 1: **E**mpty	Time you waste	Eliminate/minimize

It's astounding that nearly half of people spend a significant amount of time on activities that are either non-value-add (Mandatory) or are outright wasting time (Empty) during a typical workday. In fact, most people spend 4.3 hours per work day on non-value-add activities.

On the flip side, we also asked how many hours per day people spend on their Investment activities (i.e., high-return, value-add activities). Those who rate themselves Extremely Productive (The XP) spend a great deal more time on their priorities than The Rest.

The XP spend 5.7 hours per day on Investment activities compared to just 3.9 hours spent by The Rest.

That's 46%(!) more time on Investment activities each week.

In other words, the potential is there to increase sales force productivity by 46% without hiring any new sellers. How? Make it a priority to improve seller productivity.

The impact here can't be overstated. Think about it: people from the same companies, with the same technologies and administrative environments, and the same sales managers are getting a lot more out of their time than their peers based on their personal work habits.

Value-Add (Investment) TIME

5.7 hours

3.9 hours

Hours Spent Per Work Day

■ The XP   ■ The Rest

There are few areas that drive sales performance more than the productivity of the sales team. Note that most sales productivity tools can help a little, but it isn't tools we're talking about—it's work habits. How sellers tackle their jobs and tackle their days is what makes for productivity success and failure.

The Extremely Productive are 5.3X more likely to have productive work habits compared to The Rest.

Sales leaders are beginning to see the potential here as well. The #2 priority in the next 12 months cited by 65% of sales leaders is to improve productivity of sellers and sales teams.

The great news is productivity can, in fact, be learned.

The bad news is too many initiatives focus on some kind of productivity technology, which more often than not turns out to be the parsley on the plate of the steak dinner. It's a part of the dinner, but the meat is something else altogether.

Extremely Productive sellers employ a set of Habits and behaviors that drive not only their productivity, but also their performance, happiness, and job satisfaction.[1] Based on our field work and findings from *The Extreme Productivity Benchmark Report*, we've categorized these into the 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity.

The 3 Keys and 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity

Key 1: Manufacture Motivation

Habit 1: Recruit Your Drive. Create meaningful goals and you'll want to achieve them.

Habit 2: Ignite Your Proactivity. Get started even when it's difficult.

Habit 3: Reengineer Your Habits. When you find a better way, change what you do.

Key 2: Control Your TIME

Habit 4: Obsess Over TIME. Become a calendar fanatic.

Habit 5: Say No. Control your time or someone else will.

Habit 6: Play Hard to Get. Be impossible to distract.

Key 3: Execute in the Zone

Habit 7: Sprint into the Zone. Focus intensely.

Habit 8: Fuel Your Energy. Work with vitality and stamina.

Habit 9: Right the Ship. Get back on track when you stumble.

Learn More about the 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity

To download our whitepaper, *The 9 Habits of Extreme Productivity*, click here.

Think about your sales force as it is today. If you're like the respondents in *The Extreme Productivity Benchmark Report*, 14% of them are already Extremely Productive. They likely employ these Habits, and the 36 hacks and behaviors that underpin them. This group is also significantly more likely to be top performers, satisfied with their jobs, and very happy.

The remaining 86%? Not so much.

While it's understandable the top challenge is recruiting and hiring strong sales talent, the opportunity available to all of us is to enable our teams to be Extremely Productive, and give them the skills they need to succeed. Achieve this and you'll have the net effect of adding more sales staff for lower cost.

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1 Performance, happiness, and job satisfaction all correlated significantly to extreme productivity. Mike Schultz, Mary Flaherty, and Erica Stritch, *The Extreme Productivity Benchmark Report* (Framingham: RAIN Group, 2019).

#2: Develop Multi-Skilled Sellers

In the past several decades there have been waves of making sure sellers and sales managers learn certain skills: become consultative sellers, drive ideas and insights, win major opportunities, prospect, negotiate with buyers, drive account growth, and help sales managers coach to top performance.

Depending on the company and the decade, the big push was usually on one or two of these.

But for sellers to be successful *today*, they have to be skilled at **all of them** to one extent or another.

Here's another look at the sales priorities of sales enablement and leaders over the next 12 months:

1. Improve ability to communicate value

2. Improve productivity of sellers and sales teams

3. Increase business with existing accounts

4. Improve customer retention, repeat business, renewals

5. Improve sales opportunity approach and planning

6. Improve sellers' ability to inspire with ideas

7. Win more against difficult competitors

8. Improve sales manager effectiveness

9. Drive new logos/accounts

Each of these has to do with developing seller skills. It's worth noting that sales leaders rate each of these as "very important" more than 50% of the time. Does this mean sales and enablement leaders have too many priorities? That if they have too many priorities they have none?

No, because Top-Performing Sales Organizations have, indeed, developed skills across all of these topics systematically.
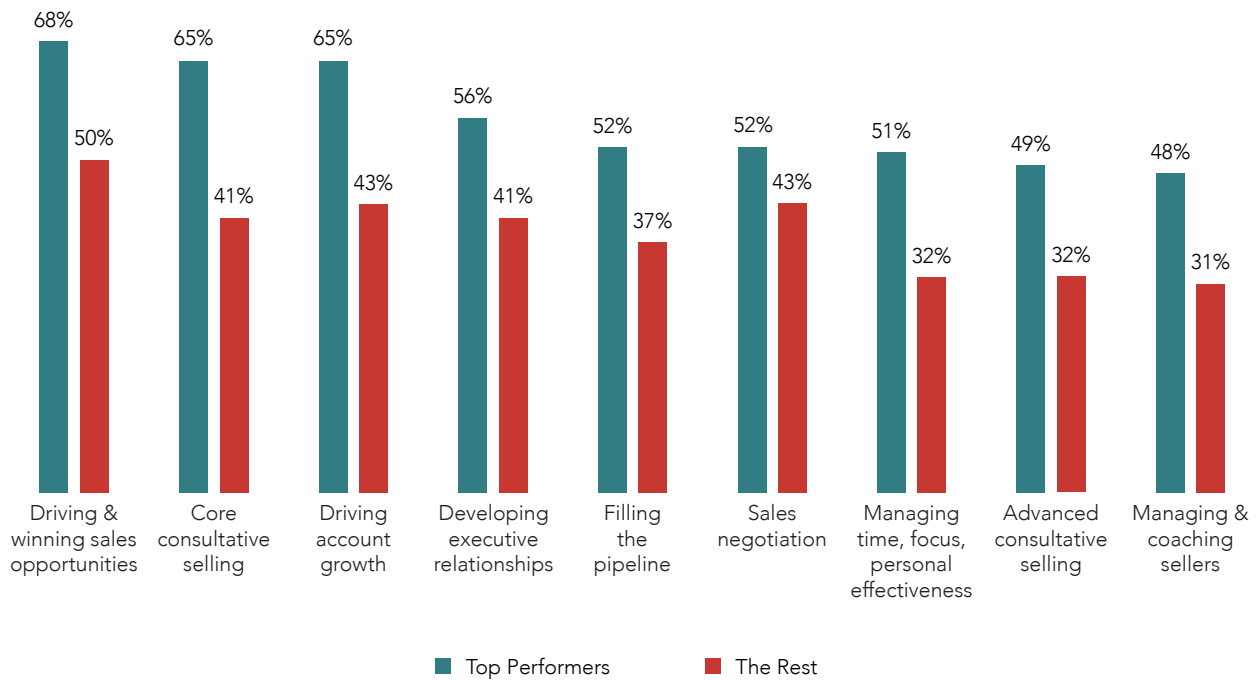
The path to success in getting there is in the vision, approach, and change management mindset you take to your sales training initiatives.

If you set your mind to developing a multi-skilled sales force, you can do it, but you must have the following:
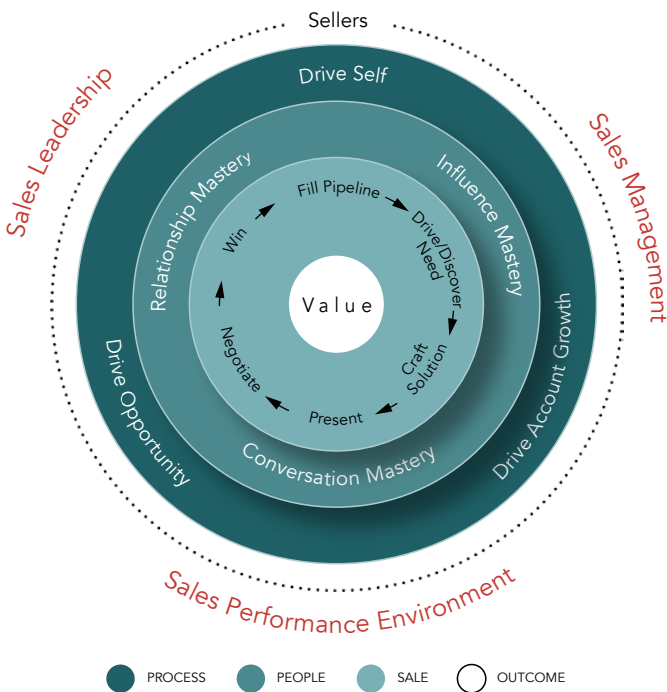
▪ **Competency Model:** Know what skills sellers need (i.e., you have a competency model or, at minimum, a rough idea of the core skills the team needs).

▪ **Curriculum:** Develop a long-term curriculum to develop the team.

▪ **Embedding Plan:** Embed a consistent sales method in the culture that everyone learns.

▪ **One Skill at a Time:** Help sellers learn and get good at each skill, only focusing on one at a time and following the set curriculum.

▪ **Sales Manager Capability:** Enable sales managers to make sure the skills are adopted and applied consistently so they become habits across the sales team.

▪ **Sales Enablement Team Support:** Enable sales enablement and training teams to become experts in the method, and able to teach and evangelize over the long-term.

Top-Performing Sales Organizations have sellers with the skills they need to find and win business consistently at a high level. ss the board, Top Performers are significantly better than The Rest.[2]

Skill	Top Performers	The Rest
Driving & winning sales opportunities	68%	50%
Core consultative selling	65%	41%
Driving account growth	65%	43%
Developing executive relationships	56%	41%
Filling the pipeline	52%	37%
Sales negotiation	52%	43%
Managing time, focus, personal effectiveness	51%	32%
Advanced consultative selling	49%	32%
Managing & coaching sellers	48%	31%

■ Top Performers   ■ The Rest

RAIN Group Sales Competency Wheel℠

● PROCESS   ● PEOPLE   ● SALE   ○ OUTCOME

2 Mike Schultz, John Doerr, and Mary Flaherty, *The Top-Performing Sales Organization* (Framingham: RAIN Group, 2016).

There is more in the details, such as defining a change management and implementation plan, measuring and reporting results, certifying that sellers have gained the skill, and so on, but big picture: if you succeed with the six points outlined, you'll be well on your way to success.

Core Sales Competencies

What skills, then, do sellers need to learn to be a top-performing seller? Every company is different—as is every sales role—but we find most sales competency models are variations on the theme of the RAIN Group Sales Competency Wheel℠. Sellers and sales organization need to excel in each of the areas in the wheel.

Value

At the center of the Sales Competency Wheel℠ is value. According to our Value-Driving Sales Organization research, sellers who drive value have higher win rates, are more likely to grow revenue, and retain top sales talent.

Everything sellers do should drive value for a buyer. Seventy percent of sales leaders report that improving their ability to communicate value is a top priority in the next 12 months. You need to have value infused in everything you do.

If your sellers can't communicate value, they won't win.

Sales Cycle

Successful sellers guide buyers through the sales cycle, providing value at every step. Everything connects to value. You must:

- Fill the pipeline by inspiring buyers with the value you bring to the table.

- Discover needs and uncover what's going on to bring your buyer the most value. Drive needs with insight selling, sharing valuable ideas and possibilities buyers didn't know existed.

- Craft a solution to give buyers the best value.

- Present value as persuasively as possible.

- Negotiate based on value over price.

- Win deals when buyers see the value is worth the effort and cost.

As you can see, the entire sales cycle is designed to drive value. Selling, however, is not done in a vacuum, and it isn't a purely academic exercise. If you want to put opportunities into the sales cycle—and do well with them—you need to succeed with people.

People

Many sales pundits say that technology will soon replace sellers.

We disagree.

To the extent that sellers succeed with people, they will succeed in sales. To make this happen, sellers need to:

- Develop and deepen relationships with buyers.

- Influence buyers and drive decisions down certain paths.

- Lead masterful sales conversations.

Process

For anything in the Sales Competency Wheel℠ to come alive consistently, sellers must succeed with three processes:

1. **Driving account growth:** Sellers need to be able to uncover where the biggest account growth opportunities are, how they're going to put them in the pipeline, and how they'll win them. Sixty-four percent of sales leaders report that increasing business with existing accounts is a top priority.

2. **Driving opportunities:** If there's a big opportunity, sellers need a process to win it. Sixty-one percent of sales leaders report that improving the sales opportunity approach and planning is a top priority.

3. **Driving self:** Sellers need to focus on being the most productive and performance-oriented people they can be. Sixty-five percent of sales leaders say that improving the productivity of sellers and sales teams is a top priority.

Making this all happen with energy, enthusiasm, and passion over time comes down to culture, which is the next layer of the wheel.

Culture

Your sales culture is the tide that raises (or lowers) all boats. Three key factors that drive culture are sales leadership, sales management, and the sales performance environment.

These influencers of culture bring the Sales Competency Wheel[SM] full circle. When sales leadership, sales managers, and your sales environment work together to prioritize value for buyers, results improve.
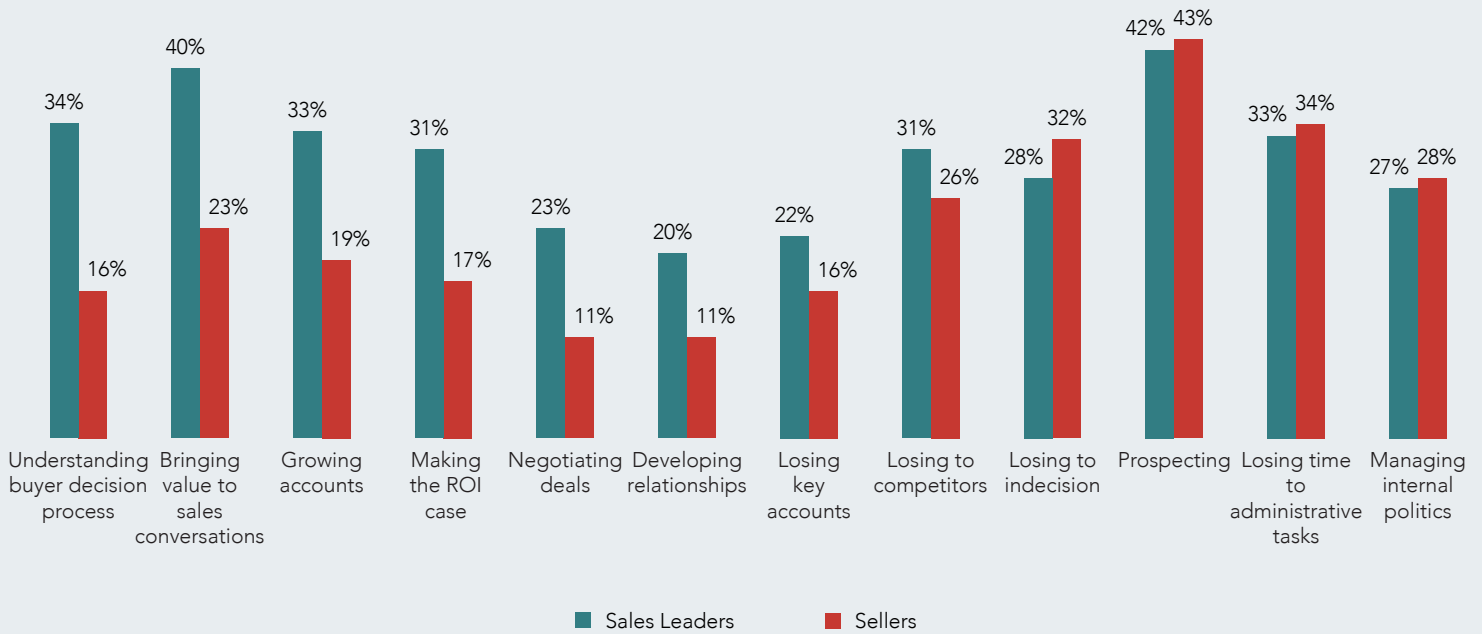
Does each seller need to be skilled in every one of these competencies? No. That's unrealistic.

However, they do need to be better than they've ever been. It's not enough to be a product expert and walk into a client with a pitch. Your sellers should excel across many of these competencies, and you should focus on building a sales force that covers them all.

Top Challenges Facing Sellers

In addition to sales enablement and leadership challenges, we asked about the challenges sellers themselves face. While the rest of the data in this report was only ranked by sales and enablement leaders, for this question, we asked 129 sellers themselves and compared the responses of the two groups.

Very Challenging Seller Issues
By Percentage Point Difference

Issue	Sales Leaders	Sellers
Understanding buyer decision process	34%	16%
Bringing value to sales conversations	40%	23%
Growing accounts	33%	19%
Making the ROI case	31%	17%
Negotiating deals	23%	11%
Developing relationships	20%	11%
Losing key accounts	22%	16%
Losing to competitors	31%	26%
Losing to indecision	28%	32%
Prospecting	42%	43%
Losing time to administrative tasks	33%	34%
Managing internal politics	27%	28%

■ Sales Leaders   ■ Sellers

Overall, sales leaders rate the challenges sellers face more strongly than the sellers themselves, with the biggest gaps being in:

- Understanding/gaining information on the buyer decision process

- Bringing value and ideas to buyer conversations

- Growing accounts

- Making the business case for your solution

- Negotiating deals

Mostly these are skill areas.

Interestingly, when it comes to skills, sellers believe they're better than sales enablement and leadership think. Get used to it: if you roll out a skills initiative, some on the team will probably say, "We don't need that." In fact, they do.

When it comes to the other areas: losing time to administrative tasks, internal politics, and losing to indecision, sellers are essentially blaming others. Sellers might say, "Well, the company makes it difficult to succeed because…" and, "We sold it well, but they couldn't get out of their own way to buy it."

These are excuses. If sellers were better at selling value, more buyers would buy. If they were more personally productive, they would achieve despite the ease of blaming administrative challenges.

Lastly, everyone agrees prospecting is difficult! In this case, everyone is right. It's achievable, but not without a good plan and strong skills.

#3: Leverage Sales Management

Sales managers are a key leverage point for most sales organizations. Managers are the ones working with sellers one-on-one, keeping them focused, advising them, checking in, and helping them stay motivated for the long-term. A great sales manager is often the difference between an average and a top-performing team.

It's understandable why sales manager development was the fourth most frequent sales challenge reported. Additionally, 27% of sales leaders say that coaching the sales force is very challenging, and 54% report that improving sales manager effectiveness is a top priority.

Sales managers have a lot they need to do:

- Recruiting, hiring, and onboarding
- Reporting and forecasting
- Managing up
- Sales coaching

The first three areas can suck up inordinate amounts of time, yet it's the last area that's key: sales managers can unlock sales performance through coaching.

Time to Onboard New Hires

In our sales leadership survey, we wanted to know not only how long it takes to onboard a new hire, but also how long it takes for new hires to reach top performance. On average, it takes sellers 15 months to become a top performer. It's a huge investment in time and resources for sales organizations to get sellers performing at that level.

3 months	Initially ready for interactions with buyers
9 months	Competent to perform
15 months	A top performer
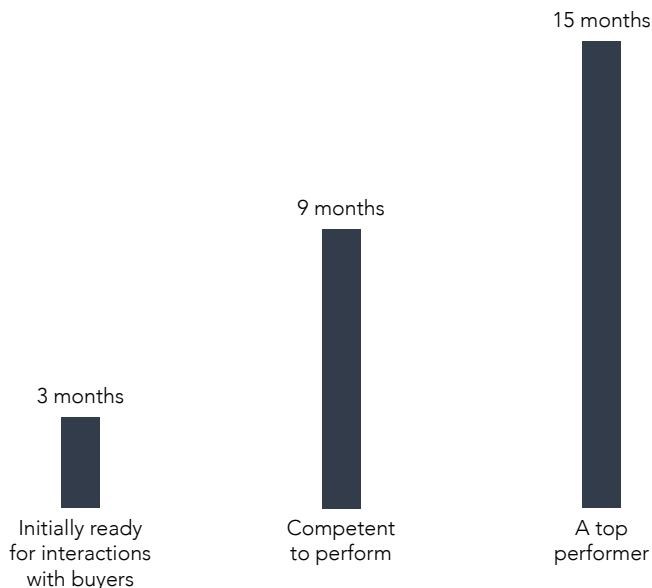
However, most sales managers come up through the sales ranks and achieve the title of sales manager because of their exemplary individual selling performance. They don't necessarily know how to manage and coach sellers. They assume that what worked for them will work for others. This is typically not the case.

For sales managers to succeed, they must excel at the following 5 Roles of a Sales Coach:

1. Motivate sellers
2. Focus seller actions
3. Help sellers execute
4. Advise sellers to win
5. Develop the team

These first three roles are rarely the focus of sales coaches. This needs to change.

Motivate

Sales managers must motivate sellers and help them find and sustain their highest level of energy and action over the long-term. We know from our Extreme Productivity research that motivation is more like a skill than an innate attribute. It can be built up and brought forth. The best sales managers do this with their teams.

Focus

Let's assume for a minute your sellers tracked their time and we reviewed how they spent a week's worth. Think they'd be doing the right activities, from morning until when they knock off for the day, across the board?

Usually the answer isn't no—it's a laugh.

The best sales managers help sellers focus their energy and efforts on the activities that yield the best return on their time. Once those activities are identified, they help sellers maintain focus while avoiding the distractions that derail so many every day.

Execute

Sales managers must help sellers execute in the zone, the place where sole focus on one activity yields a feeling of energized focus, involvement, and enjoyment of the activity. If sellers execute in the zone on the right activities, your sales force will produce amazing results.

Advise

In some schools of coaching thought, coaches should avoid giving direct advice because it will hinder sellers' progress. A good sales manager knows when to do this (i.e., teach a man to fish) and also when to give them ideas directly to win a sale. In any case, great sales managers are constantly running deal reviews (which we call Win Labs), building and reviewing account growth plans, and planning what to do for sellers to tackle their territory properly.

Great sales managers do this. Most sales managers don't do this nearly enough.

Develop

Great sales managers develop seller knowledge, skills, and attributes to improve performance. They reinforce new skills and hold sellers accountable for applying the knowledge.

Without sales manager support and great coaching, any efforts to implement the first two ideas in this report—improve sales productivity and develop multi-skilled sellers—will fail.

The $64,000 Question

We asked sales and enablement leaders the question:

If you could propose one new initiative, and senior leadership would approve and fund it in full, what would that initiative be?

We received 391 open-ended responses to this question that covered a broad range of areas. Here are a few representative responses grouped into broader areas. This is what your colleagues have on their minds, unedited.

Recruiting, Hiring and Onboarding

- "Better onboarding."
- "Increase the number of days in the new hire training."
- "New hire ramp up time."
- "Improvement of recruiting and hiring."
- "Recruitment."

Sales Training

- "Sales training."
- "Delivery of training in best-in-class strategic sales methodologies that are implemented consistently."
- "Find effective training programs for sales staff in sales and technical knowledge."
- "Training & making salespersons understand & implement sales as a process."
- "Developing sales force skills."

Sales Management and Coaching

- "Better quality sales coaching."
- "Build/develop a coaching culture."
- "Continuous sales coaching and training."
- "Have a coach dedicated to coaching sales managers to develop their skills in sales management (strategy, coaching techniques, time organization)."
- "In-depth, in-house training for sales management, including skills for coaching, role playing, and leadership; prioritization and time management, accurate reporting."

Selling Value

- "Consultative selling training with reinforcement and coaching."
- "Establish and enhance 'consultative, value-based sales approach.'"
- "Insight Selling Training."

Prospecting/Lead Generation

- "Have sellers get really, really good at prospecting, particularly shortening the sales cycle and showing value in what has become a commoditized industry—banking."
- "Improve qualified lead generation."
- "Lead generation and prospecting."
- "More consistent and deliberate lead generation."

CRM and Technology

- "Implement a predictive CRM tool that interfaces with our existing data warehouse."
- "Improved CRM Management."
- "More technology."
- "Streamline our CRM processes such that data entry is easier for reps to allow for useful and complete data that can allow the Sales Operations & Enablement team to provide insights to both reps and managers alike, leading to more / faster closed-won opportunities."

Motivating the Sales Force

- "Empowering and motivating the sales force."
- "Motivating sales team members to achieve more."

As noted previously, there were some comments about recruiting and technology, but most were about helping the existing team achieve more through better skills and work habits.

Conclusion

It would be easy to look at the three recommended initiatives in this report and nod your head in agreement. After all, they tackle the top challenges and priorities of sales leaders.

It's not easy to make them come alive though.

So how do you get it all done?

As a sales leader, you need to build a sales team with deep, diverse skills. You need to develop managers to unleash seller potential. You need to improve the productivity of your sales force. You need to generate qualified, sales-ready leads. You need to ramp up sellers and teams faster. You need to make lasting change in seller behavior and skills.

And you need to do all of this for the least amount possible while showing impressive results.

Many turn to sales training. In fact, re-read the responses to our $64,000 question on page 16. You'll see that sales leaders, if money were no object, would invest more heavily in developing their sales teams.

As a sales training company, you might think we are thrilled to see and hear this.

Yes and no.

Too many organizations approach training with a short-term perspective. They focus on a program to develop a specific skill. They see short term improvements in results and ROI and call it a success.

It can be difficult, however, to get budget every year for every new skill, every new initiative, and every new workshop. While sales enablement and leaders have the best intention of keeping a new skill initiative alive and embedding it in the culture, structural problems get in the way.

Over time, sellers who were trained in the specific skill leave. New hires are not trained in the skill. The skill is not reinforced beyond 3-6 months, so people go back to their old habits. And rarely do sales leaders plan in advance for the next logical skill to build upon the first.

Whatever your competency wheel looks like, it doesn't come to life.
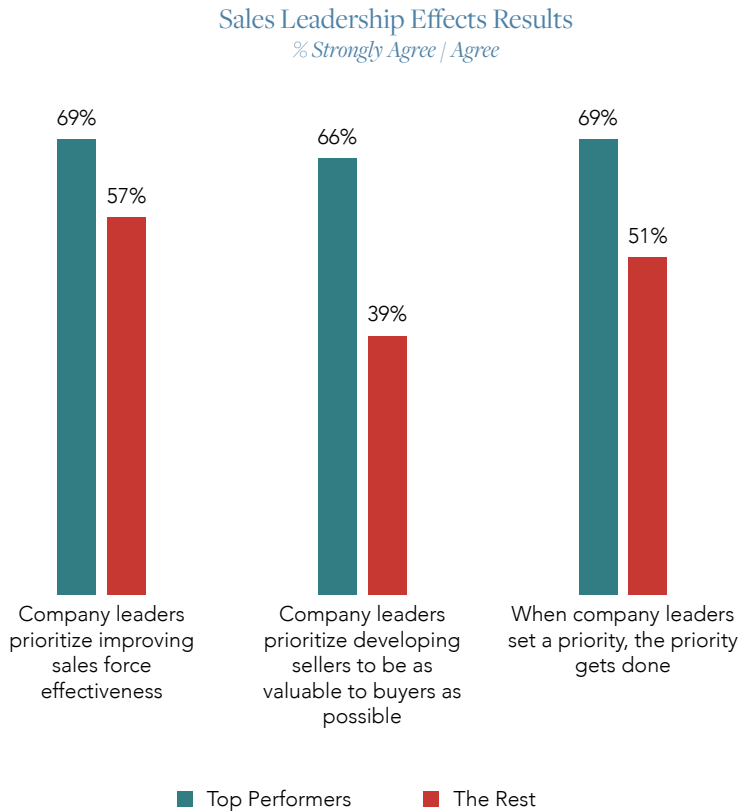
But it's still what you need to do, and the team at RAIN Group is committed to changing what we do in order to help you make this happen.

Developing a multi-skilled, highly-productive sales force with great sales managers is key to success. As an industry, we have to do a better job of helping our clients move beyond the "one skill at a time" approach.

Through RAIN Group's Total Access License®, it's our intention to change the game of how sales leaders approach seller and sales manager development, how they buy sales training, and how they embed a sales method in their organization.

Building a Culture of Sales Excellence

When it comes to making all of this happen, it starts with you: the sales leader. In our Top-Performing Sales Organization study, we found the following:[3]

Sales Leadership Effects Results
% Strongly Agree / Agree

	69%	57%		66%	39%		69%	51%

- Company leaders prioritize improving sales force effectiveness
- Company leaders prioritize developing sellers to be as valuable to buyers as possible
- When company leaders set a priority, the priority gets done

■ Top Performers   ■ The Rest

Not only do Top-Performing Sales Organizations prioritize sales force effectiveness and value, they are also much more likely to follow through with their priorities.

It's up to you to build a culture of sales excellence through ongoing skill development. Do this and you'll not only win more, but also attract more top sales talent, sellers will stay longer, and you'll see much greater growth and success.

To get there, we recommend starting with the three initiatives to address the sales challenges and achieve the sales priorities of today's sales leaders:

1. Improve the sales productivity of your team

2. Develop multi skilled sellers

3. Leverage sales management

It takes leadership's time, priority, and focus to do each of these—and to do them well. At RAIN Group, we look forward to helping you make it all happen.

---

3 Mike Schultz, John Doerr, and Mary Flaherty, *The Top-Performing Sales Organization.*

Total Access License®

Adopt a complete and robust sales method with RAIN Group's Total Access License® to drive top sales performance.

You'll enjoy access to our suite of instructor-led sales training programs, online learning, performance support tools, learning journeys, and resources for your entire sales team. You'll also get the greatest results from your investment with our Client Success Team, ensuring seamless integration and use across your sales organization.

Features of RAIN Group's Total Access License

Clients have access to:

- 10 major sales training programs
- 88 individual eLearning lessons across 9 courses
- 5 core sales strategy, conversation, and planning tools, including the Strategic Account Planner, Sales Opportunity Planner, and Sales Conversation Planner
- Two dozen sales-driving guides, templates, and worksheets
- Extreme Productivity Assessment (individual and multi-rater)
- Digital version of all participant materials

Resources available for facilitators:

- Detailed facilitator guides for major training programs
- On-demand walkthroughs for major training programs
- 33 coaching guides for core individual eLearning lessons
- 11 in-depth webinars for live delivery

Embed an Award-Winning Sales Method

- **Customizable:** Tailor to your company's specific way of selling
- **Flexible:** Develop curricula and deliver as it fits your schedule
- **Complete Sales Method:** Cover all aspects of sales skills, sales productivity, sales coaching, and more
- **Scalable:** Deliver as much or little as you like from small groups to large roll outs as and when you need
- **Accelerated Onboarding:** Maximize onboarding success and shorten time to full productivity
- **World-Class Education System:** Deliver training that works, sticks, and transfers on the job

Unleash the Full Sales Potential of Your Team

Help your team master sales conversations, fill their pipelines, increase win rates, negotiate the best agreements, and drive growth at strategic accounts by getting all RAIN Group IP, programs, and tools for the cost of about one program per year.

A Total Access License is...

Flexible: Full use of RAIN Group content across all delivery formats, learning journeys, onboarding and ongoing learning, and partnership with RAIN Group based on your team's strategy, structure, and preferences.

Cost-effective: Visionary pricing designed to dramatically decrease training cost per person while increasing training effectiveness.

Results-oriented: RAIN Group's leading intellectual property and world-class education system drive major increases in sales performance and results.

Contact RAIN Group

Phone: 1-508-405-0438

Email: info@raingroup.com

Web: raingroup.com

About RAIN Group

RAIN Group helps companies unleash the sales potential of their teams. We've helped hundreds of thousands of sellers, managers, and professionals in more than 75 countries increase their sales significantly with our sales training and sales performance improvement.

Global Locations

Boston - Headquarters

Bogotá	Mumbai
Geneva	Seoul
Johannesburg	Sydney
London	Toronto

About RAIN Group

Unleash the Sales Potential of Your Team with RAIN Group

RAIN Group is a sales training, assessment, and performance improvement company that helps leading organizations improve sales results. We've helped hundreds of thousands of sellers, managers, and professionals in more than 75 countries increase their sales significantly with RAIN Group's consulting and sales methodology.

We can help you:

Implement Sales Training that Delivers Real Results

RAIN Group's sales training system inspires real change and delivers real results that last. Our rigorous approach includes sales team evaluation, customized training programs, robust reinforcement, and coaching to help you and your team develop sales and negotiation skills, and maximize your results.

Grow Your Key Accounts

At most companies, there's a huge, untapped opportunity to add more value—and thus sell more—to existing accounts. We help our clients capitalize on these revenue growth opportunities. Whether it's simply increasing cross-selling and up-selling or implementing a major strategic account management program, we can help.

Identify Who Can and Will Sell with Great Success

Our assessments measure sales attributes and skills, identifying the factors that really make a difference in sales performance. Whether you're looking to hire someone who can and will sell, or looking to improve sales performance, we'll help you build the most successful sales team.

Implement World-Class Sales Coaching

We coach sellers, professionals, and leaders individually and in groups to achieve the greatest and fastest increase in sales results. And we train and certify leaders and managers in our RAIN Sales Coaching system. Often, it's RAIN Sales Coaching that truly unlocks the team's potential, and keeps them motivated to produce the best results consistently.

Find out more about how RAIN Group can help you unleash the sales potential of your team by visiting raingroup.com or calling (508) 405-0438.

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