

**GUIDE**

# Leveraging the Best Learning Methodologies for Sales Success





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# It's not just what you learn—it's how you learn

Sales is increasingly complex. Today's reps are expected to demonstrate subject matter expertise and keep up with the latest industry-specific news and regulations—all while providing bespoke experiences to buyers.

These challenges are why companies need to prioritize continuous learning, especially given the current climate of high turnover, skill and labor shortages, and budget cuts.

This can seem overwhelming for sales and enablement leaders, especially if they lack the right tools and technology to deliver learning and development at scale to geographically dispersed teams. On top of that, knowing what learning methodologies to use and when to use them can feel like guesswork.

To determine the right methodologies, it helps to separate learning into three categories: **training, practicing, and coaching.**





## Training: Developing and reinforcing knowledge and skills

To provide a consultative experience for customers, it's important for all reps to demonstrate expertise in their company's products, services, and solutions. They also have to be well-versed in the trends and regulations of their industry, have highly developed soft skills, and understand different selling techniques—including when to deploy them.



Average win rates increase by as much as **10%** when sellers participate in sales training programs.<sup>1</sup>



**76%** of employees are more likely to stay with a company that offers continuous training.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup><https://trainingindustry.com/magazine/issue/sales-training-is-it-worth-it/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.forbes.com/sites/markcperna/2022/04/12/why-learning--development-is-now-a-competitive-differentiator-and-how-to-get-on-board/?sh=1fbf402f30ff>



## Methods that support training

To effectively deliver training and development programs at scale, businesses should keep in mind the pedagogical methods that are most impactful for adult learners, which can differ drastically from those of children and adolescents.<sup>3</sup> Adult learners benefit more from self-directed learning that reflect their experiences. They also prefer active learning (e.g., debate, experimentation, and hands-on exercises) rather than passive learning (e.g., memorization). It's important to keep those pedagogical principles in mind when executing these training methods:



**Onboarding programs:** Every new rep needs a proper onboarding experience to help them get up to speed on their organization's mission, products, and sales approaches. To be effective, these programs should include interactive content, promote goal setting, facilitate relationship building, and extend beyond the first 60 days on the job.



**Micro-learning courses:** To fit learning into their busy schedules, reps need bite-sized learning options that can be completed in minutes instead of hours. In lieu of longer courses that require, frankly, too much of their time, consider breaking courses into chunks that can be digested in small increments.



**Personalized learning paths:** Every rep has a different skill level. Custom learning paths put reps in the driver's seat, able to pick the content that resonates best with them. Managers can also create custom paths based on a rep's role and/or unique needs.



**Live training events:** Instructor-led training can be beneficial to reinforce with instructor-led training. This can occur in person or via a live virtual session. Individual assessments should be done prior to such sessions, providing benchmark data that can be compared to a given rep's performance after the session in terms of how many new opportunities they get, how many customers they convert, and how much faster they're closing deals.



**Job aids:** To help reps do their jobs effectively, job aids can be a great tool for providing instant reminders and reinforcing important information.

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.futurelearn.com/info/blog/how-to-teach-adult-learners>



# Practicing: Applying learning to the job

The concept of the forgetting curve, theorized by famed 19th century German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus, estimates that approximately 70% of new information is lost within 25 hours if no attempt is made to retain it. A study by Gartner confirms the accuracy of Ebbinghaus's theory in the context of sales training: **"B2B sales reps forget 70% of the information they learn within a week of training, and 87% will forget it within a month."**<sup>4</sup>



**\$300** billion per year globally is spent on training.<sup>5</sup>

If the training discussed in the previous section of this guide isn't reinforced with some form of practical application, reps risk losing hours of learning and companies risk losing significant dollars.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/the-evolution-of-sales-training-and-coaching-technology>

<sup>5</sup><https://research.com/careers/training-industry-statistics>



# Methods of practice that promote learning retention

Reps are much more likely to retain training if the content aligns with real-world scenarios and contains built-in exercises to help them practice what they've learned.<sup>6</sup> To achieve this, learning programs should contain interactive components that reinforce key concepts, provide practice options, and include skills assessments to help reps and their managers measure progress. Here are some good examples:



**Interactive knowledge checks:** Building interactive quizzes and knowledge checks helps reps remain focused and engaged while also helping them remember the most important messages and concepts.



**Access to experts:** Does your organization have experts or top-performing reps that could help educate the others? Leverage their talents to disseminate that knowledge, and make it easy for reps to ask these experts questions.

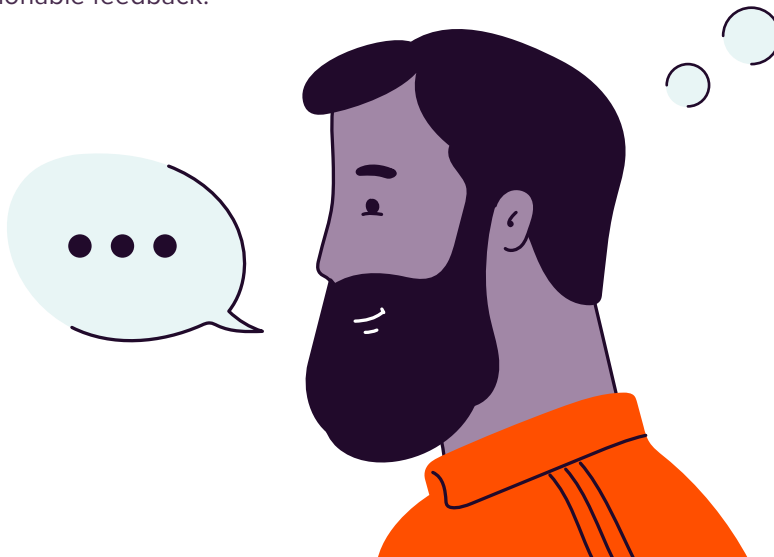


**Communication rehearsals:** Provide reps with the ability to practice what they've learned via recordable video and/or audio rehearsals as well as simulated email and chat conversations that can later be evaluated by their managers for direct, relevant, actionable feedback.



**Certifications:** Many people pursue certifications from professional associations to prove their credibility. But there's nothing stopping businesses from creating their own internal certifications to ensure reps master a particular sales methodology or in-house practice.

<sup>6</sup><https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/reasons-poor-employee-learning-retention-how-can-improve-kapadia/>



# Coaching: Providing the guidance reps need to perfect their craft

Self-directed learning can be very effective in helping reps acquire the knowledge needed to perform their roles. However, to really succeed, every rep could use a good coach.



Targeted, **one-on-one coaching** provides reps with the support system they need to learn, progress, and achieve their full potential.<sup>7</sup>

Today, many reps work remotely without the opportunity to observe their high-performing peers in action. This makes coaching more difficult, but also more important.



Teams see **16.7%** higher revenue growth with coaching over teams that don't receive coaching.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.td.org/insights/why-sales-training-and-coaching-are-needed>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinessdevelopmentcouncil/2018/03/07/are-first-line-sales-managers-in-danger-of-extinction/?sh=4e55fc8b3678>







## Methods for coaching winning teams

To help reps refine their skills and exceed quotas, it's important to reinforce learning with data-driven coaching plans. Data helps reps and their coaches understand where reps have knowledge and skill gaps. From there, reps and coaches can work together on strategies that help reps accomplish their career goals. Here's how to put these ideas into action:



**Role-plays:** Scenario-based training allows reps to put their skills into action. Role-playing enables sellers to build confidence and perfect their technique before speaking with a prospect or customer.



**Mentoring:** Pairing less-experienced reps with seasoned ones helps them get the guidance and encouragement needed to reach their full potential. Often more casual than interactions with managers, relationships with mentors provide opportunities for reps to learn more candidly.



**Skills-based data:** The ability to rehearse and record practice scenarios like those mentioned earlier are crucial to successful coaching because of the data they can provide. For instance, managers can generate personalized learning paths and provide coaching sessions based on a given rep's progress with specific characteristics and skills, such as clarity, confidence, and credibility.

# Enable every rep to be a high performer

Choosing effective learning methodologies isn't the biggest challenge once you know what your options are. Deploying them at scale is the real challenge. Offering a host of sales enablement functionalities, from content management, automation, and personalization capabilities to strategic planning features and rich analytics, Seismic provides an integrated platform that makes it easy to implement learning methodologies across even the largest organizations without sacrificing the unique needs of individual learners.

[Speak with one of our experts to get started →](#)





## About Seismic

Seismic is the global leader in enablement, helping organizations engage customers, enable teams, and ignite revenue growth. The Seismic Enablement Cloud™ is the most powerful, unified enablement platform that equips customer-facing teams with the right skills, content, tools, and insights to grow and win. From the world's largest enterprises to startups and small businesses, more than 2,000 organizations around the globe trust Seismic for their enablement needs. Seismic is headquartered in San Diego with offices across North America, Europe, and Australia.

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