

E-BOOK

Major League Sales Coaching

How 18 World-Class Sales Leaders
Help Reps Become MVPs





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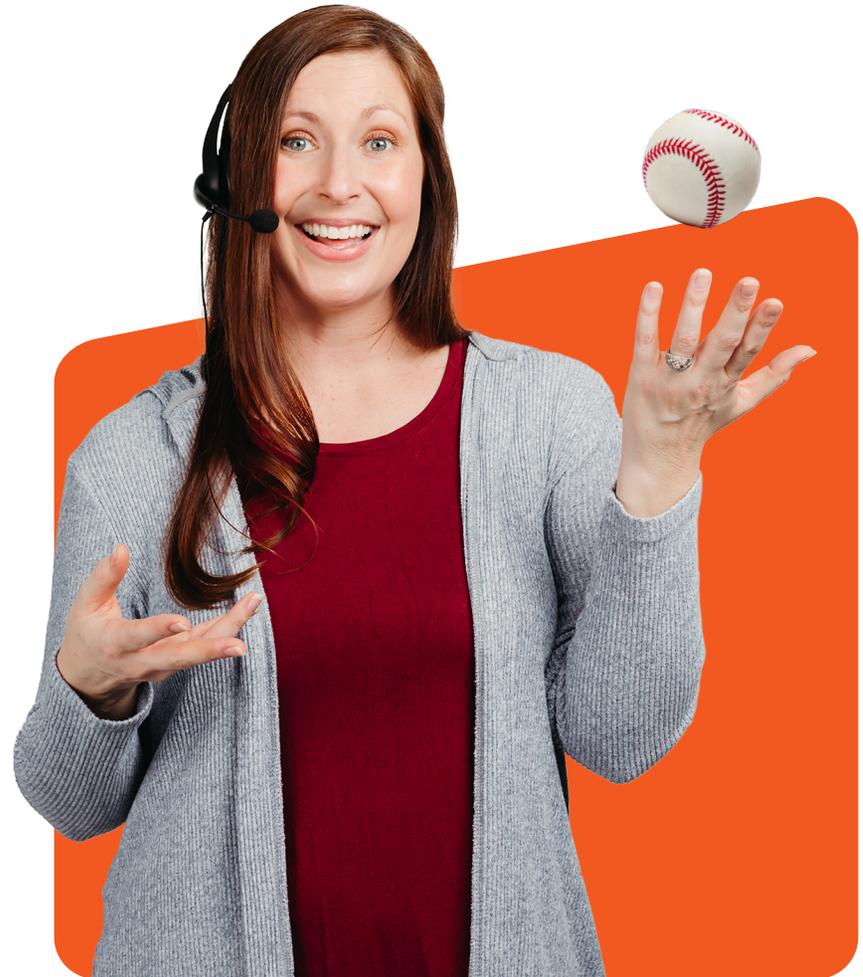


The Warm Up

Here's the deal, team—we've got a problem on our hands. But it's a really good one.

Our industry is saturated with ideas about how to become the remarkable sales coaches we all want to be. But with so many voices, books, models, programs, tips—you name it—throwing in their two cents on what coaching should look like, it's tough to know what's truly the most effective way to help reps reach their full potential. That's why we created this playbook. We gathered insights from 18 of the world's most creative sales coaches to highlight what's working for them so we can do more of it.

This playbook is a compilation of the brilliance we gleaned from actual practitioners, sales enablement gurus, and sales leaders who are all trying to hit goals every quarter, just like you. Our hope is that you take their expertise and run with it—that you use this playbook to build a sales coaching model managers love and reps swear by. Let's enable reps to do Better Work and close deals like it's their job... because it is.



Meet the Coaches



Bryan Naas
VP of Sales Productivity
Braze



Meganne Brezina
Sr. Manager
Sales Enablement



John Moore
VP of Revenue Enablement
Bigtincan



Josh Roth
Sr. Business Development Manager
WalkMe



Todd Caponi
Author of The Transparency Sale



Reena Ambai
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SalesLoft

Meet the Coaches



Mike Simmons
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Tyler Kaufman
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Jenny Vance
Chief Revenue Officer
Curvo Labs

Meet the Coaches



Roderick Jefferson

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Roderick Jefferson & Associates, LLC



Jon Velasco

Sales Operations & Enablement Manager
Passageways



Josh Allen

Chief Revenue Officer
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A.J. Morris

Sales Enablement Specialist
Lessonly



Rich Adams

Manager, Sales Tools Strategy
Zoom



Irina Soriano

Head of Enablement
Seismic

An Overview of the Sales Coaching Playbook

We looked at the conversations with our sales coaches from a birds' eye view, and here's what we found: There are three definitive flavors of coaching. Every insight the coaches shared with us falls into one of these three categories.



Performance Coaching

Think streamlining the knowledge, tools, and support reps need to close deals. This is about ensuring that not a day goes by where reps aren't getting 1% better at hitting quota and working towards their professional goals.



Skills Coaching

Think interpersonal and tactical skills. This is about maximizing the talent your reps already have and working together to develop new skills in them, too. In this section, we'll talk about the 15 skills the best reps learn and fine tune.



1:1 Coaching

Think continuous growth, relationship building, and getting agreements together. This piece of the playbook is about blending performance and skills coaching into consistent, intentional 1:1 coaching sessions with your reps.



Performance Coaching

Our job is to help reps do their jobs.

Plain and simple, the best coaches empower their teams to win. For sales coaches specifically, that looks like enabling reps to perform and consistently hit quota. Easier said than done? Yes. Impossible? No.

Performance coaching is two-fold. It's about highlighting what reps are doing exceptionally well in deals and celebrating those things, but it's also about finding areas for improvement and refining your reps' strategies. Tactically, this piece of the playbook is about streamlining the knowledge, tools, and support reps need to grow so they're constantly improving the way they work deals and making strides towards their professional goals. But don't just take it from us—take it from the pros! Here are the five things the best coaches keep in mind as they navigate conversations and coaching sessions related to performance.



The 5 Performance Coaching Tactics

#1

Challenge with kindness.

Be open, honest, and kind. Deliver the easy and the tough feedback. Don't be afraid to play devil's advocate with your reps.

“Putting a hard topic on the table isn't antagonistic. It's solution-oriented.”

Jenny V.
Curvo Labs





The Experts Say...

“In order to grow, reps have to consistently be challenged. What we try to drive is daily learning and coaching. How can I get a little bit better each day? It’s up to managers and coaches to challenge themselves and their reps. If you have a 9/10 demo yesterday, how can you make the next one a 10/10?”

Rich A.

Zoom



The 5 Performance Coaching Tactics

#1 Challenge with kindness.

#2 Don't be afraid to pivot.

High-performing reps are adaptable. That flexibility starts with coaches who identify areas for performance improvement and provide tactful feedback.

“There’s a fallacy that top performers (and really any reps) are solely “coin-operated.” Once a rep has tasted the status of being at the top, they want to maintain and grow their lead. We have to create environments where those top performers are intrinsically motivated to both understand, and seek continuous opportunities to learn and grow.”

Todd C.

Author of *The Transparency Sale*



The Experts Say...

“What reps need is a constant feedback loop and, as enablement professionals, we provide the structure for that feedback. I want my learners and sellers to be comfortable with the idea of being uncomfortable because we can only grow when we’re out of our comfort zones.”

Meganne B.

Sales Enablement

The 5 Performance Coaching Tactics

#1 Challenge with kindness.

#2 Don't be afraid to pivot.

#3 Make “clarity” your middle name.

Or maybe even your first. The best coaches simplify what's complicated about their reps' roles.

“Whether you're coaching new hires or legacy sellers, your first job is to find out where they're having the most problems. Secondly, work directly with other sales leaders and managers to find out where the roadblocks are. And thirdly, go out in the field and understand what's happening. You'll learn a ton about how reps are positioning things, handling objections, and messaging, and it'll become clear what's great and where changes need to happen.”

Roderick J.

Roderick Jefferson & Associates, LLC



The Experts Say...

“It’s important for our reps to know how they can grow from a performance standpoint. That comes with transparency and showing them the leading and lagging KPIs we track. A personal dashboard for daily use that shows them win rates, overdue opportunities, activities, and more is essential.”

Jon V.

Passageways



The 5 Performance Coaching Tactics

- #1 Challenge with kindness.**
- #2 Don't be afraid to pivot.**
- #3 Make “clarity” your middle name.**
- #4 Rely on the numbers.**

So much of sales performance can be quantified. Build dashboards that help you and your reps visualize how they're doing.

“There are four categories of sales metrics that can help you diagnose where you really need the help. Number one is the number of opportunities you're working on, which helps you diagnose your ability to effectively get in the door and prospect. Two is your deal sizes, which help you diagnose your value and how you're positioning it. Three are your win rates, which have a lot to do with your positioning and whether or not you're working the right deals. And lastly, four is cycle lengths. What are we doing to help buyers predict what their experience is going to be?”

Todd C.

Author of *The Transparency Sale*



The Experts Say...

“We use the sales funnel to determine where reps need coaching. So, we will look at our conversion rate to understand where some of the bigger performance gaps are. And from there, we’ll try to narrow down what they need, whether it’s market, product, or organizational knowledge, or something else. I try to pinpoint performance problems by using our sales funnel as the number one diagnostic measure.”

Reena A.

SalesLoft

The 5 Performance Coaching Tactics

- #1 Challenge with kindness.**
- #2 Don't be afraid to pivot.**
- #3 Make “clarity” your middle name.**
- #4 Rely on the numbers.**
- #5 Step in their shoes.**

Actionable performance coaching starts with empathy. It's on us to ask ourselves daily, “What can I do to better understand my team and better enable them to sell?”

“When I think of tactics that we use to coach our teams, I mainly think of role plays—between managers and individual contributors, as well as in a peer-to-peer setting. I think of team activities and team meetings, for example, working together on pitches, working together on deals. This boosts understanding across the team and refines everyone's skills.”

Meganne B.
Sales Enablement



The Experts Say...

“The best sales coaches have empathy. They need to be understanding and know what’s best for their team. And they’re also experienced; it helps to have done all different kinds of sales roles and leverage that knowledge.”

Josh R.

WalkMe





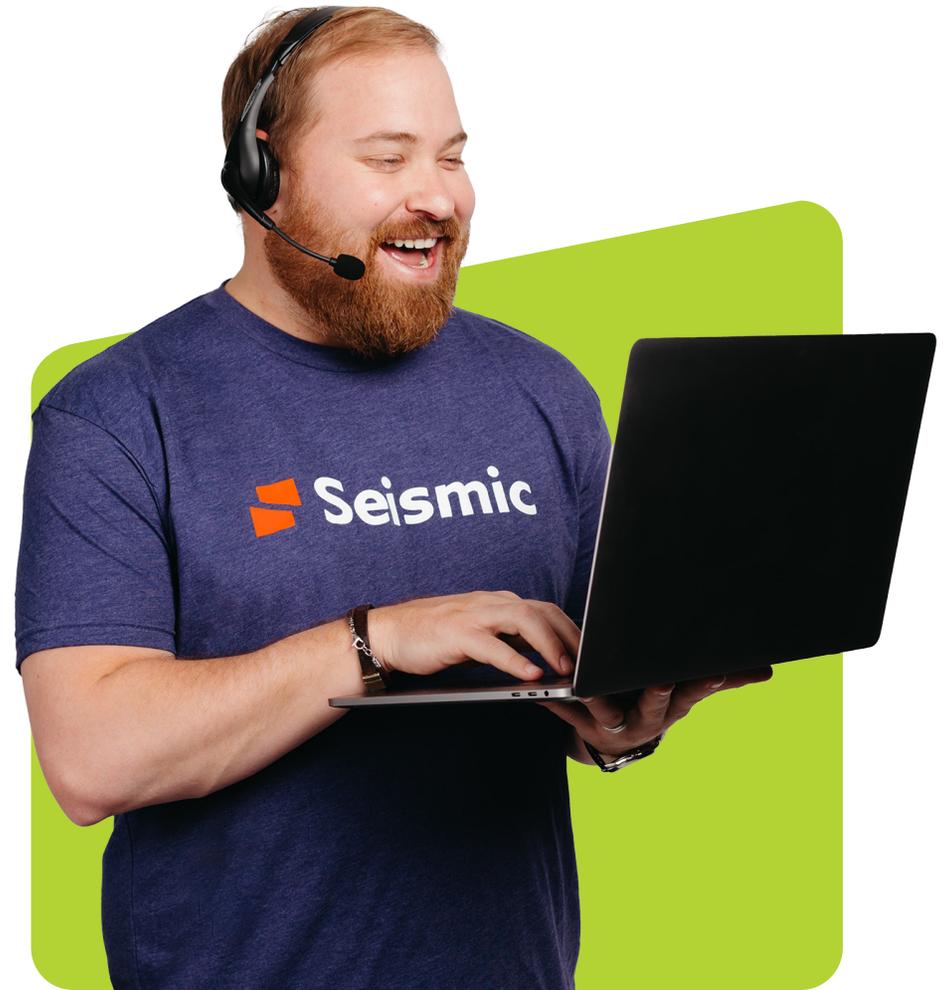
Skills Coaching

Skills pay the bills.

If performance coaching is about helping reps boost their batting averages, skills coaching is about logging hours with them in the cages. The name of the skills coaching game is practice.

Here's what we mean—a good coach inspires and encourages their team, but a great coach gets in the weeds. The coaches we admire most help their reps excel in the boots-on-the-ground work they need to do in order to build great relationships and ultimately close deals. A huge part of enabling your team to perform is discovering what skills are essential to level-up their performance.

Look no further for those skills. We've identified what we think are the 15 most important competencies for sales MVPs. Want to watch your team win? Carve out time to hone these skills in your reps. At Seismic, we have reps and managers choose one of these 15 to work on each quarter because we're convinced that focusing on just one skill at a time is the best way to invest in our people and develop them in the long-run.



15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

#1

Become a trusted advisor.

The strongest reps are product experts, compassion aficionados, and trustworthy guides for their prospects.



“We have weekly training sessions that cover selling skills, product knowledge, industry-specific insights, and more. This learning loop of collaboration, training, and feedback on the material ensures we continue to help our sellers grow in a direction that benefits them, our business, and ultimately, our customers.”

John M.
Bigtincan



The Experts Say...

“Building trust with your buyer is all about using your domain acumen to show your champion you can help them solve their challenges through a consultative relationship. When a rep gains this status, you become a partner, not a salesperson.”

Bryan N.

Braze



15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

#1

Become a trusted advisor.

#2

Own your business.

This is all about drive, passion, and work ethic. The best reps demonstrate extreme ownership of their deal cycles and outcomes.

“Sale cycles are complex, and you have to inspire confidence in your reps to try new things and understand their business. Otherwise, it’s really, really hard to be successful.”

Reena A.
SalesLoft

15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

#1 Become a trusted advisor.

#2 Own your business.

#3 Be coachable.

Work with managers to hire people who are hardwired to ask for feedback.

“Only hire managers who are going to coach people, too. Spreadsheet/KPI managers are a dime-a-dozen and detrimental to your sales culture. Salespeople want to learn and get better at their craft. Don’t tell them they’re not doing enough activity—spend the time to understand the obstacles that are getting in the way of them being able to do the activity.”

Josh A.
Drift



The Experts Say...

“Follow your own lead here, too. The best coaches know how to be coached themselves. This can be from your reps, your manager, and peers. You are never too good for coaching.”

Rich A.

Zoom

15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

#1 Become a trusted advisor.

#2 Own your business.

#3 Be coachable.

#4 Develop your territory.

Enable your reps with the confidence they need to network, build rapport, and foster relationships in their territories.

“We all know the value of a well-developed territory, so it only makes sense that the best coaches help their reps create territory plans with key relationship builders and influencers to build that rapport. Territory development sounds daunting, but it doesn’t have to be when everyone works together and leverages their network.”

Bryan N.
Braze

15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

#1 Become a trusted advisor.

#2 Own your business.

#3 Be coachable.

#4 Develop your territory.

#5 Generate new opportunities.

Equip reps with the tools they need to get creative, research effectively, and fill that pipe.

“We have so much opportunity data right in our own CRM system. By analyzing where and why deals stall, as well as the deals we win and lose, we can learn a ton about the team’s knowledge gaps. I can coach my team to see areas where cross-sell opportunities exist or where competitors are better messaging a solution for a specific business challenge that we could actually solve better.”

John M.
Bigtincan



15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

“Frequently and accurately forecasting is an extremely important part of a sales rep’s job. From an enablement perspective, understanding where our conversion rates in a deal cycle are highest and lowest from stage to stage is paramount. If our forecasts aren’t accurate, we can only work off of skewed data to help the team.”

A.J. Morris
Seismic

#6 Forecast effectively.

Top reps understand typical deal mechanics and can be honest in their pipe evaluation.





15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

“The best ways to identify areas where your team needs coaching are listening to calls or watching demos to actually see what’s happening in real time. This is also just a great way to celebrate people’s successes and be able to take the things that are best-in-class from these calls to show the whole team what great looks like.”

Chad D.
Hearsay Systems

#6

Forecast effectively.

#7

Run an effective meeting.

The name of the game is preparation. Effective meetings make everyone feel heard when they end with action items and agreements.



15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

“It’s hard to ask great questions about a person, their business, their challenges, their desires, etc., if you’re not a painfully curious individual. Curiosity is one of the intrinsic characteristics a rep has to have when they walk in the door. It’s part of who they are. And if they don’t have it when they join your team, it is a really, really hard characteristic to move.”

Josh A.
Drift

#6

Forecast effectively.

#7

Run an effective meeting.

#8

Uncover implications.

Practice with your reps how to be insatiably curious by asking probing questions.



15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

“To be really effective in today’s world and truly be a modernized sales rep, we have to have great time management to deliver more effective messaging in the sales process. So how do you do this? You absolutely have to have a sales engagement platform like Outreach or SalesLoft that’s gonna help you stay organized.”

Rich A.
Drift

#6

Forecast effectively.

#7

Run an effective meeting.

#8

Uncover implications.

#9

Deliver effective messaging.

Leverage stories. Demonstrate credibility. Radiate enthusiasm.

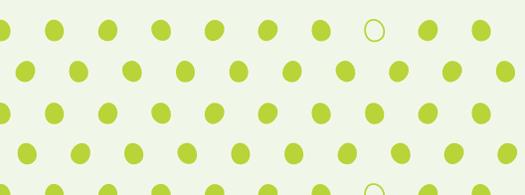


The Experts Say...

“We make all of our decisions using the emotional parts of our brains, and we really only use logic to back them up. So, telling stories is vital in pulling people in. Transparency sells better than perfection. Leading with our flaws is not only super helpful for the buying brain to make decisions, but because of the proliferation of reviews, we now have to do it anyways.”

Todd C.

The Transparency Sale





15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

“We’ve implemented call scoring to measure reps’ ability to execute our discovery call process. I put together a spreadsheet with point totals that the rep and manager fill out together to score how they did with each major milestone:

Introduction (greeting, rapport, call expectations/UFC)

Discovery (pain, need, impact)

Demo (concise, helpful to the pains uncovered)

Closing (scheduled next steps, push for meeting with other stakeholder, trial closing).”

Jon V.

Passageways

#6

Forecast effectively.

#7

Run an effective meeting.

#8

Uncover implications.

#9

Deliver effective messaging.

#10

Present value.

Prove the value and relevance of your product relative to the business needs of your prospects.

15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

#11 Handle objections.

Asking clarifying questions and actively listening helps prospects feel heard and understood.



“We’ve heard it time and time again—sales reps need to be better listeners than they are presenters. Never is that more true than when handling an objection during the sales process. The most successful reps show empathy without being condescending or patronizing. Once they hear an objection, they paraphrase and repeat it back, ask qualifying questions to explore the root source of it, and then confirm they have permission to continue moving forward to the next ‘Yes.’”

Daren T.
Allcloud

15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

#11

Handle objections.

#12

Build a solution based on needs.

Understanding the business motivators of your prospects is step one to building a great solution.

“Too many people focus on preparing their responses versus truly understanding what the buyer is telling them. Ask open-ended questions. A discovery call that ends in a series of yes/no responses does not tell anyone anything about the customer’s needs or underlying motivations.”

John M.
Bigtincan

15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

#11 Handle objections.

#12 Build a solution based on needs.

#13 Leverage customer stories.

This is all about delivering value and telling customers they're not alone in their needs.

“The most important tool in a rep’s toolbox is not software, but a catalog of customer success stories that they can share with other prospects, customers, and teammates. Showing someone that you understand where they are trying to go and that others have already arrived there with you is the best tool any sales professional can possess.”

Steve B.
Salesforce

15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

#11

Handle objections.

#12

Build a solution based on needs.

#13

Leverage customer stories.

#14

Differentiate the competition.

Great coaches keep reps up to date on their competitive landscape and advantage.

“The messaging around the competitive landscape is delicate and critical. First and foremost, coaches and reps both need to always be stepping back, asking more questions, and then putting what they learned into messaging.”

Roderick J.

Roderick Jefferson & Associates, LLC

15 Selling Skills for All-Star Reps

#11

Handle objections.

#12

Build a solution based on needs.

#13

Leverage customer stories.

#14

Differentiate the competition.

#15

Negotiate Beneficial terms.

Deals should feel like a win-win for both the seller and the buyer.

“[At Seismic] we leverage the four levers of negotiating a sale: timing, contract length, deal size, and payment terms. The best reps are transparent and experts at navigating a mutually beneficial agreement.”

Bryan N.
Braze

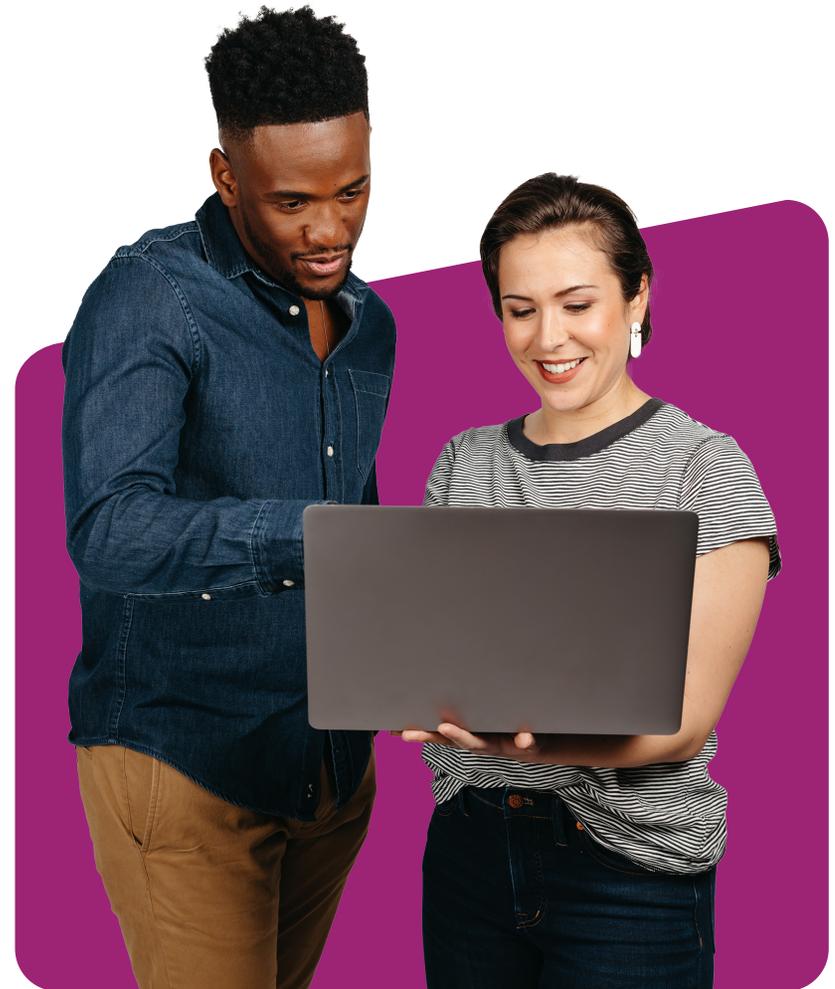


1:1 Coaching

Better coaching = Better 1:1s = Better sales.

We'll keep this section short and sweet—1:1s are where the coaching magic happens. They're where performance coaching and skills coaching are brought together and where we as coaches get to nurture relationships with reps that are built on consistency, trust, and feedback.

Coaching happens all the time: in passing, in informal conversations, and in large group settings. But the best sales leaders leverage their 1:1s to deliver their most focused, personalized coaching. So, what's the secret to making these meetings as productive and fruitful as possible? According to the pros, there are three.



3 Ways to Maximize Your Coaching 1:1s

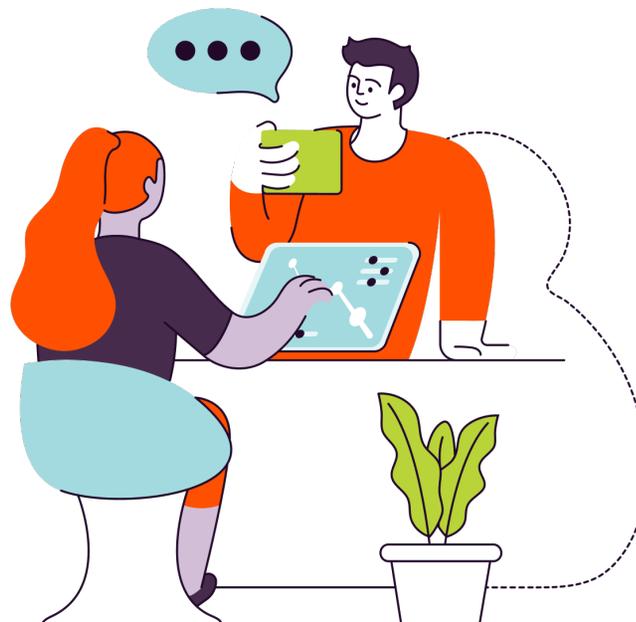
#1

Be consistent.

The frequency and length of your 1:1s will fluctuate depending on the structure and needs of your team, and that's totally normal. What matters most though is that they're consistent. Reps need to know someone will continually be on their team, always showing up for them to celebrate where they're winning and to give them new ways to improve. In the same way consistency in personal relationships builds trust, consistency in working relationships allows reps to feel safe enough to ask for feedback, learn, test new tactics, and ultimately grow.

“Weekly 1:1s are an absolute must. Within this 1:1, I develop a plan with each rep based on what professional and personal goals they have.”

Josh R.
WalkMe





The Experts Say...

“Consistent 1:1s are about the reps, not just their opportunities. They should be primarily dedicated to their individual development, challenges, growth and should be separate from funnel/quota/activity reviews.”

Steve B.

Salesforce



3 Ways to Maximize Your Coaching 1:1s

#1

Be consistent.

#2

Always listen before you speak.

If the phrase “constructive criticism” makes you cringe a little bit, you’re not alone. With great 1:1s and great relationships with your reps though, feedback doesn’t feel like a, “You need to do better.” critiquing session, but rather a, “I see your potential—here’s how we could take your skills to the next level.” kind of conversation. At Lessonly, we talk about psychological safety all the time, and as a coach, one of the best ways to foster safety on your team is to truly observe your reps and listen to them before you ever coach.

“I always start my coaching process by watching and observing. I see how reps interact in an environment. I ask questions. And then I provide coaching when we’re 1:1 with each other. Not in front of the broader group because you don’t want anyone to get defensive. Nor do you want people to start to get in a situation where they’re reluctant to share in the future.”

Mike S.
Catalyst Sale



The Experts Say...

“Of the three best attributes our top sales coaches have, the first and foremost is listening. Coaching is about sitting back, asking open-ended questions, and then learning more than you’re actually sharing. Always repeat back and get clarification and confirmation of what you learn, because sometimes what you hear is not what people are saying..”

Roderick J.

Roderick Jefferson & Associates, LLC

3 Ways to Maximize Your Coaching 1:1s

#1

Be consistent.

#2

Always listen before you speak.

#3

Be your reps' biggest fan.

This might feel like a no-brainer, but rooting for your reps is so valuable. Investing in your team and showing them that you're for them and with them will make you a go-to person when things are going well in their deals and when things aren't. Becoming a confidant often starts with intentional 1:1s that highlight their innate skills and their success.

“Some of the most important skills to develop in our reps are listening skills (like the ability to read between the lines and hear the unspoken), written and verbal communication, and persuasion and influencing skills. These things are essential for us as coaches, too.”

Irina S.
Seismic



The Experts Say...

“Feedback-rich culture allows us all to practice development. I like to give most of my feedback right in the moment (as long as it’s appropriate), and I do so without any sugar coating. A hack that I’ve come to love is walking meetings when reps are struggling. It lets reps take a step back from what’s happening and gives everyone some space and perspective.”

Tyler K.

Archetype Solutions Group





Post-Game Analysis

Good game, team! We hope the wisdom of these 18 all-stars has you feeling fully equipped to knock your future coaching sessions out of the park. We'll leave you with this final piece of sales coaching goodness:

The best sales coaches are obsessed with people, not numbers.

Whether we're talking reps or prospects, the best coaches put people first and trust that the numbers they want to see will follow suit. As coaches, we need to master asking questions, providing structure, giving feedback, but most importantly, being human. There's no such thing as coaching with too much compassion, authenticity, or transparency because these are the very traits that not only make reps stronger salespeople, but better humans. And we're in the business of better people, better work, and of course, better sales.



P.S.: A Final Thought on Remote Coaching

If you find yourself coaching a fully remote sales team, we see you and we're here to help. The tools and tactics in his playbook are just as effective, but your delivery will need to look different. If you're in the remote boat, here are a few tips and resources to help you get your remote team aligned and winning together.

Establish and redefine these five tenets of your remote enablement strategy:



Understanding - Learn what's going on and what your prospects are experiencing.



Messaging - What have you been saying before that may need to be changed?



Resourcing - Give your reps the resources they need to "wow" the prospects you're trying to help.



Operations - Invest in tools that'll keep your team connected and enabled—no matter where they work from.



Stories - Provide your team with stories and encourage them to tell them to prospects. Empathy sells.



Visit our [Remote Work Resource Hub](#)



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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