

How To Coach Sales In The Digital Age

MindTickle!★

Training develops sales people, coaching develops sales champions

According to the International Coach Federation (ICF) the average company can expect a return of seven times their initial investment in coaching. This is validated by research from The Corporate Executive Board Company that shows sales reps who receive just three hours of coaching a month exceed their goals by 7%, boosting revenue by 25% and increasing their average close rate by 70%.

They're pretty compelling reasons to coach your reps.

In this ebook, we will explain:

- Why sales coaching is imperative now
- How to develop an effective coaching plan
- What resources and tools you need to execute your coaching plan
- How to identify what to coach each member of your sales team on
- The importance of managers in the coaching process
- Who the stakeholders in the coaching process are
- How to ensure all the stakeholders remain accountable
- Practical tips to coach each of your team members more effectively

About MindTickle

MindTickle is the most comprehensive sales readiness solution for customer facing teams. Sales teams across a wide range of industries use MindTickle's award-winning platform to train, coach, and align their sales team's message. Put simply MindTickle helps sales reps and managers be more effective at selling.

MindTickle gives sales teams the power to conduct sales onboarding, on-demand training, knowledge certifications, bite-sized mobile updates, gamified trainings, coaching and role-plays. When combined with a data-driven approach, MindTickle accelerates time-to-productivity, ensures consistent execution, and helps boost sales performance.

Companies leveraging MindTickle have achieved bigger deal sizes, higher win rates, quicker ramp-up times and reduced sales cycles.

MindTickle powers sales readiness at over 150 companies and has more than 250,000 platform users who are now addressing sales enablement successfully. In this ebook we bring together our wealth of experience to share how the most successful sales teams are coached.

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Why should I read this?

If you're looking for new ways to transform how you enable your sales team and help them succeed, then read on.

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The digital era has arrived and research indicates it is the route to the customer that matters, not just the size of the balance sheet. That means the biggest asset a business can have is a foolproof framework to engage and convert prospects into customers. But the path to reach the customer has also undergone considerable changes.

Customers now investigate your business and competitors at the click of a mouse, read reviews and seek advice without even leaving their desk. In fact, over 60% of a buyer's journey is over before they even speak to a sales rep, and it's estimated that by 2020 customers will manage 85% of their relationship with businesses without talking to anyone. This phenomenon is so common now that it's even got a name, webrooming.

Businesses that don't find new ways to engage and convert prospects will be left behind or disappear completely. According to Pierre Nanterm, CEO of Accenture digitisation is the main reason, why over half the companies on the Fortune 500 have disappeared since 2000.

For sales organisations the challenge is set. **Change the way you sell or perish.**

Sales reps who once relied on the hard sell can no longer bamboozle prospective customers with details about their product features, because the customer may know more than they do. And customers do not want to hear a practiced pitch anymore, they've already read it on your website. What they want is proof that your product or service can solve their problems, data that shows what difference it can make, and facts that prove it's the best option for them.



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Three reasons why you need to change the way you sell in the digital age are:

- 1. Buyers have changed:** Buyers conduct their own research first, and are much further down their purchasing journey before they come into contact with your sales rep. As they're well-informed, they're much more demanding. All they want to now know is what's in for them;
- 2. In-person relationships are difficult to develop:** As your sales reps are meeting buyers much later in their purchasing journey, there's less opportunity for them to build relationships. This also means they have less opportunities to communicate the value they offer in person;
- 3. Competitors are moving at breakneck speed:** Disruptive change, new product launches and feature upgrades happen every day now. Your sales teams have to absorb a lot of new information on a daily basis just to keep up with the industry trends. This also raises challenges about how your reps incorporate latest information into their sales pitches.

If your reps are not receiving sufficient coaching, your sales team may demonstrate one or more of these symptoms:

- ✓ Inconsistent results regardless of the time spent on coaching
- ✓ Inability of the sales team to meet quotas
- ✓ Reps demanding help to close or move deals forward
- ✓ Increase in attrition rates
- ✓ No sign of positive impact on performance, despite the collaborative effort from managers and/or reps

These factors give rise to several enablement and managerial challenges. Throughout their lifecycle reps need to continuously build on their knowledge, hone their selling skills, and build a cadence through repetition and updates. Coaching plays a crucial role in helping reps sharpen their selling skills.

If that sounds like your business, then read on to learn how to implement an effective coaching program that will ensure your reps are always sales ready.

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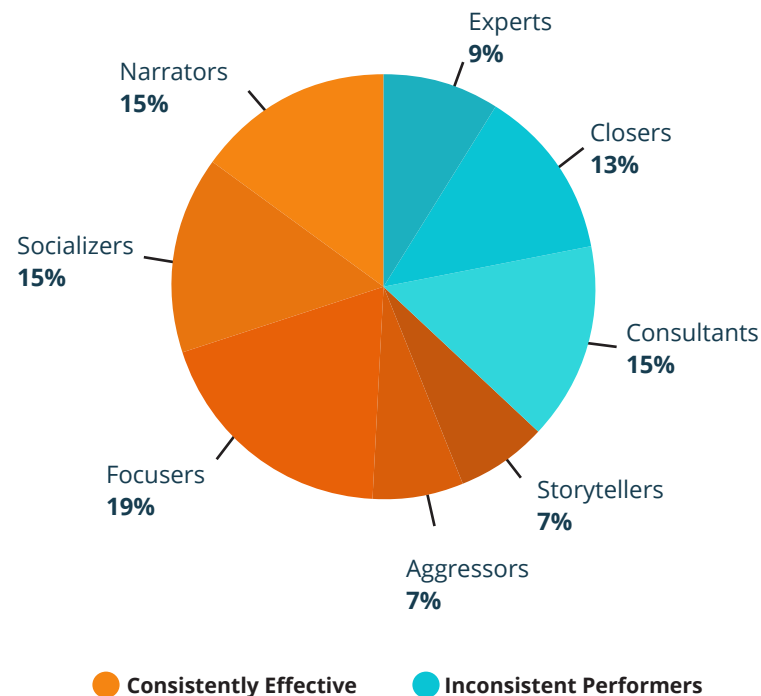
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63% of salespeople aren't effective

Research published by Harvard Business Review has found that 63% of salespeople demonstrate behaviors that actually drive their performance down. That means that only a third of your sales team is actually performing consistently. This research also identified 8 types of sales reps:

The 8 Types of Salespeople



Based on research published by Harvard Business Review
<http://bit.ly/2i4Ms4z>

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The researchers observed how 800 reps applied 23 different sales skills, identified for success. These skills can be put into 7 categories:

1. Meeting preparation
2. Customer interaction
3. Company presentation
4. Presentation rapport
5. Sales pitch
6. Storytelling
7. Rising to the challenge

The good news is that each of these skill-sets are behaviors that can be learned and improved upon with the right training, coaching and reinforcement activities. This is where managers have a large role to play. As Tamara Schenk, Research Director of CSO Insights explains, "Lasting behavioral change requires ongoing reinforcement. This is where coaching comes into play."

After all, building capability is a top priority for CXOs, and according to McKinsey coaching sales reps has the biggest impact on capability development. This means that coaching is no longer a nice-to-have but a business imperative. Research by the Sales Executive Council found that coaching the middle 60% can improve the performance of your sales team by up to 19%. Even if you coach those below average to above average, you can improve performance of 50% of your sales force by 6-8%.

Without focussed coaching to introduce behavioral change in your reps, it's quite possible that your reps may never ramp up effectively. Ultimately, sales coaching for the sake of coaching isn't enough. For managers to coach effectively, it is crucial to have a structured process where managers can identify gaps and resolve accordingly. Without a structured coaching program you're just leaving your sales success and revenue to chance. Even the best reps can utilize some tips to improve their behaviors and win rates.

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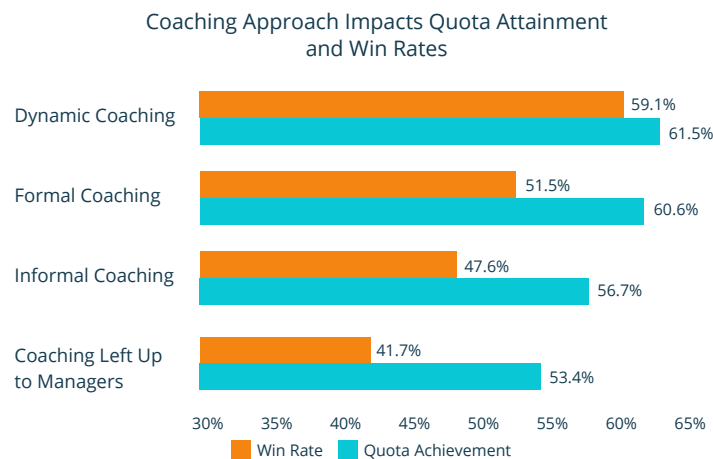
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Coaching has a proven impact on performance

CSO Insights found that any coaching approach that you opt for impacts quota attainment and win rates, dynamic and formal coaching delivering the most impact.

That's because coaching isn't about auditing what your reps are (or aren't) doing and putting a quick fix in place. It's about having a well structured framework that helps them improve how they sell in both the short and long-term. This will make them better sales reps for life. This can include specific sales skills, from prospecting to closing, or negotiation techniques that will help them get more prospects over time.

Which sales leader can ignore a better win rate and quota attainment? None. That's why investing in sales enablement to build coaching frameworks and develop sales manager's coaching capabilities is key.



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Everyone is different but coaching is fundamental

Every sales manager has their own unique coaching style but their end goal is the same; to develop and improve how their sales reps sell and meet quotas. Similarly, no two sales reps are the same, each have their individual needs and skill gaps that require coaching. A culture of accountability ensures managers coach reps where they need it the most.

A structured coaching framework can have a marked impact on coaching effectiveness and its results. It ensures that your reps demonstrate consistent behaviour, produce more predictable sales results, and follow your sales process.

But it's no longer enough to coach via one-on-one meetings a few times a year. Companies are now agile and reps and their managers need to be able to move quickly too. Reps need constant development to help them sell better. They may need to be coached on a variety of things including:

- Identifying what stage their buyers are in;
- Understanding their sales funnel and how to prioritize prospects;
- Learning how to tailor value messages to buyers;
- Preparing for that big meeting;
- Navigating who their champion is;
- Trying to find the right angle to close the deal;
- Understanding how to maximise the opportunity in their territory; and
- Analyzing a lost deal.

Most importantly, this has to be done in real-time, not just when it's scheduled into the diary.

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The coaching formula

In this day and age, industry dynamics are changing quickly and competition is fierce, so it's not wise to leave your coaching to chance.

The key to effective coaching is to provide specific tools, identify gaps and enable remediation workflow that is readily accessible to both managers and reps.

A coaching framework needs to have enough flexibility to accommodate different managerial styles and the individual needs of sales reps. Managers shouldn't be left to try and figure it out on their own. In fact, managers may not always be the best people to coach on some things at all. Sales Enablement and Product Marketing may be better equipped to coach reps on product demos while their managers are best to coach on the finer points of deals.

That's why best-in-class sales organizations are moving towards an outcome oriented approach, where different leaders and subject matter experts (SME) collaborate to make coaching successful. Working closely with our customers we've found that there are three key areas where coaching plays an important role.



Knowledge and Messaging

This considers your rep's ability to use their knowledge in sales situations.
It covers things like your value proposition to how to conduct a demo.



Sales Skills

This looks at your rep's ability to handle specific sales scenarios like preparing for a meeting through to closing the deal.



Execution Discipline

This considers your reps' ability to execute a pitch by following a set process.

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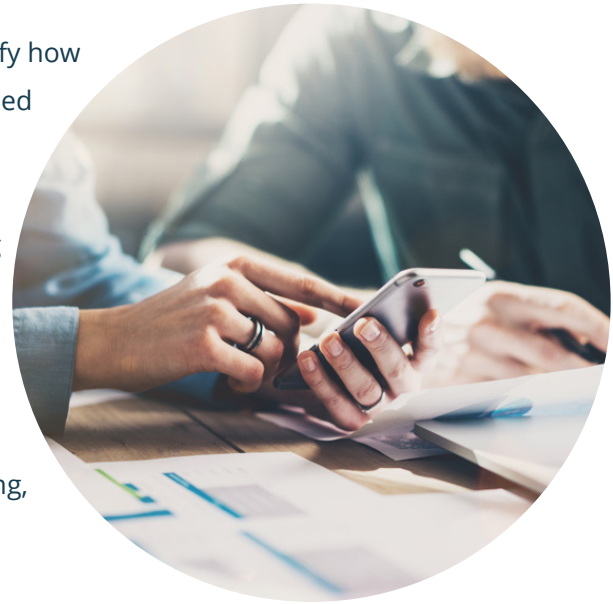
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First, in order to be effective you need to identify how important each of these areas are. Next you need to weigh each one of them up based on their value in your coaching framework. This then forms the foundation for a structured coaching framework that incorporates processes and tools to help sales managers identify what their reps need and how to coach them. The framework moves the focus of sales coaching from addressing a single incident in one meeting, to the overall success of your reps and their cumulative sales outcomes.



Following a sales coaching framework also helps identify the needs of individual reps. While a couple of good reps may have been able to lift an entire team in the past, this isn't the case any more. Traditionally sales managers have tended to focus in on the "tails" or their very best and very worst reps, while the majority are left to fend for themselves. But as mentioned earlier, research proves that directing sales coaching efforts on the average can have a great impact on overall performance.

A sales coaching framework also has the additional benefit of providing a structure that can be leveraged by the broader sales and leadership team. As sales enablement and capability teams become more involved in helping reps sell, they are also taking on some of the responsibility for coaching them. This doesn't mean that sales managers will eventually have no role in coaching. To the contrary, their role will now be elevated to focus in on the more challenging and higher impact opportunities that will make their sales reps not just good but great.

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The amount of coaching that is required in each category will depend on your business, your product or service and the experience of your reps. For example, if you're selling FMCG to mom and pop retail stores then execution discipline is likely to have more weight than knowledge. Whereas sales skills are likely to be key if you're selling a complex enterprise software platform.

$aX + bY + cZ = \text{Effective Sales Coaching}$

a = the weight allocated to Knowledge

b = the weight allocated to Sales Skills

c = the weight allocated to Sales Process
and Execution Discipline

X = Knowledge and Messaging

Y = Sales Skills

Z = Sales Process and
Execution Discipline

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This structure works best when the responsibilities of each stakeholder are clear and their expectations are aligned. The **aX + bY + cZ** formula for effective sales coaching encompasses the needs of most sales organizations:

Type	X Knowledge and Messaging	Y Sales Skills	Z Sales Process and Execution
Definition	The ability to use knowledge in context of sales situations	The ability to handle specific sales scenarios	The ability to execute the plan
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Articulating product value• Competitive defense and offense• Perfecting the demo• Delivering the right elevator pitch• Explaining the big picture when appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing and prospecting• Negotiating with authority• Navigating complex sales scenarios• Identifying decision makers and champions• Identifying buyers early in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Following the sales process• Coaching ongoing deals• Coaching for deals won and lost• In situation coaching
Input	Rep submits role play for assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video• Audio• Demo Recording• Presentation with audio	In field observation and CRM review to provide context to coaching	In field observation and CRM review to provid context to coaching
Output	Feedback, necessary training and remediation	Manager feedback and necessary training and remediation	Manager feedback and necessary training and remediation
Weight	a	b	c

The trick to the perfect coaching formula is that it's customized for your business. Your magic formula will take into account the specific intricacies of your industry, product and prospects, along with the needs of your reps and managers to create your own **aX + bY + cZ**.

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Designing an Effective Sales Coaching Program

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It takes a team to raise a sales rep

No athlete is perfect. Each has their own unique skills and areas that they can improve on, that's why even elite athletes need a team behind them. Usain Bolt is the fastest person alive but in the lead up to the Rio Olympics (where he won his ninth Olympic gold medal) he credited his team led by coach Glen Mills as the strength behind his success.

Mills has never been amongst the top athletes. He's a career coach, one who has learned the ropes from the ground up and trained in aspects of anatomy, agility, co-ordination and even talent identification to become the best in the business. Running may be an individual sport, but Bolt's success is thanks to a team of experts from doctors to nutritionists to Mills, who all put his needs front and center.



Usain St. Leo Bolt ✓
@usainbolt

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The Guru Glen Mills



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Sales is no different. While achieving quota is up to the individual rep, their success is a team effort. For each team the focal point of their efforts starts and ends with the needs of the sales rep.



While the manager plays an integral role in coaching their sales reps to success, they are not the only ones involved in the process. Sales Enablement and Capability, Sales Leadership and the Product team are becoming increasingly involved in the coaching process. Some actually take on the role of coach, while others help enable sales managers so they can coach more effectively. Each and every role in the coaching process is important.

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For some organizations their sales coaching framework looks like this:

Coach	Knowledge and Messaging	Sales Skills	Sales Process and Execution Discipline
What?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Product value proposition• Competitive message• Product demo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation• Negotiation• Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deal Coaching• Win/Loss Coaching• Process Coaching
Who?	Could be Sales Enablement and Product Marketing	Could be Sales Manager and Sales Coach	Could be Sales Manager

With the roles of each stakeholder defined within the coaching framework your SMEs have clear guidelines on what they need to do. This also surrounds sales reps with a team that can help them achieve success.

Having everyone on board is an important step towards creating a culture of coaching. To ensure the culture is entrenched it's also necessary for coaches to be accountable. Scott Edinger, from Edinger Consulting Group, suggests some useful ways to reinforce the culture of coaching in HBR. His suggestions include establishing uniform expectations across every member of the team from VP Sales down, highlight the exemplars and share exactly what they did right. This ensures both giving and receiving coaching is role-modelled by all. Finally he suggests a carrot and stick approach to accountability, where those who engage in the coaching process are rewarded and those who opt-out face consequences.

The right mix of these activities will depend on the nature of your team, its members and how established sales coaching is in your organization. Like anything worth doing, coaching requires hard work, but the potential benefits to your team and topline revenue are great.

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What is effective sales coaching?

Studies have found that effective sales coaching programs can improve sales reps' performance by up to 20%. But many managers don't know how to coach well. They may have been great sales reps, but just because they've been promoted into a management role doesn't mean they're equipped to perform it.

Effective sales coaching isn't about auditing your reps activities every now and again, or giving them in-person feedback every once in awhile. It's about building a regular cadence to provide useful, insightful and specific coaching on areas that the individual rep actually needs help in. After all, coaching sales reps can be tricky for a sales coach because each individual has different areas that they need to work on.

Say your rep has five areas that they need coaching on, how do you know their sales managers can address every single one? And how do you prepare your managers to find these gaps in the first place? Perhaps they're a gun at pipeline management, but aren't too good when it comes to deal coaching.

Given the breadth of the role of sales manager, it's simply not possible for them to know how to coach sales reps on everything. But, just like their reps, they can also be trained to plug their own gaps.

Another issue that all of us deal with at one point in time or another is "avoidance". If something is difficult to do, or you simply don't know where to start, it's much easier to put it in the "too hard" basket and forget about it until something worse happens. And that's a problem.

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Trying to coach sales reps only in adversity, like when they've just lost a big deal, is hard work for both the manager and the rep. After all, no one wants attention just because they haven't done their best, and coaching isn't about yelling at someone for not performing at their best. It's about encouraging and developing reps to be their best.

That's why it's important to ensure sales managers are given the tools and skills they need to coach, so they have no excuse not to coach proactively rather than reactively.

Before we get into the details of guiding sales managers on how to coach effectively, it's important to differentiate between coaching, training and managing.

- Management is about overseeing things and making sure they stay on track.
- Training focuses on imparting new knowledge, teaching a new skill or behavior.
- Coaching is about developing skills, improving performance and / or changing behaviors.

The International Coaching Federation defines coaching as:

// An interactive process to help individuals and organizations develop more rapidly and produce more satisfying results; improving other's ability to set goals, take action, make better decisions and make full use of their natural strengths.



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It's not about telling someone what to do, but about helping them look at different ways to do things to achieve better results. When done well, sales coaching will drive productivity and effectiveness in a sales organisation.

The first step in helping managers learn how to coach effectively is to develop a sales coaching program. There is no one size fits all solution here because every business is different. To outline what your coaching framework should include, why not ask your sales reps what they want to learn. Speak to your sales managers to find out what they would find useful, and ask your executives what their objectives are.

This information can then be used to build your $aX + bY + cZ$ formula for effective sales coaching discussed in [Chapter 2](#). This framework is tailored to your organization's needs, while ensuring you cover the necessary aspects of sales coaching including Knowledge, Messaging, Sales Skills, Process and Execution Discipline.

Though no sales coaching program will be identical, it's critical that each ensures that managers have enough knowledge required to coach, skills and tools required to build cadence for coaching and the discipline to execute a coaching initiative.

While these cover sales specific areas, Candice Frankovelgia also suggests five skills that coaches need to develop in their sales team:

1. Building relationships
2. Providing assessment
3. Challenging thinking and assumptions
4. Supporting and encouraging
5. Driving results

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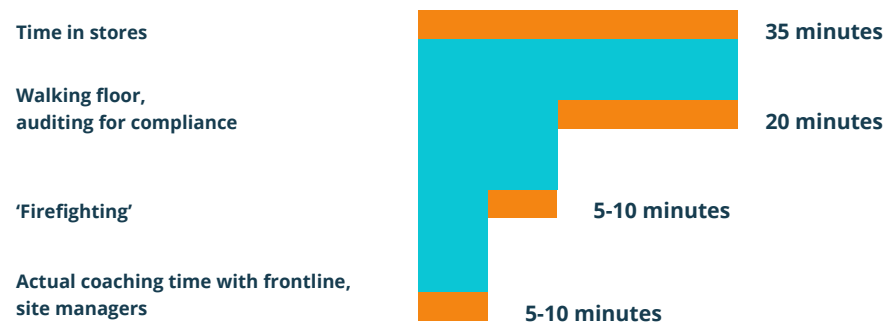
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Helping sales managers coach effectively

Harvard Business Review found that only 12% of international business leaders believed they had invested sufficiently in the development of their frontline managers. That means 88% of sales managers do not have a well-planned strategy.

But this isn't just about teaching sales managers to coach, it's about empowering them so they can coach. Sales managers in many organizations are weighed down by a plethora of tasks that don't necessarily help them contribute to revenue or develop their team. McKinsey found that frontline managers spend between 30% to 60% of their time doing administrative tasks or sitting in meetings. A further 10% to 50% of their time is spent doing non-managerial tasks like travelling, special projects or actually selling themselves. This means that only 10% to 40% of their time is spent actually managing, and only a portion of this is spent coaching.

**DISTRICT MANAGERS' REPORTED TIME PER DAY
WITH SITE MANAGERS AND FRONTLINE SALES/SERVICE STAFF**



One of the quickest way to give sales managers more time to coach is to take away the administrative tasks that are not adding any value or revenue. Whether it's automating sales reporting or leveraging technology to reduce travel time, there are many ways to enable sales managers to perform these tasks more efficiently or remove them completely.

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According to Intrepid Learning Solutions, there are four primary tasks a manager has:



But HBR found that 40% of international business leaders believed that their frontline managers didn't even have sufficient leadership development, tools or training, let alone the time to coach.

Companies with the best sales training programs revisit their existing programs to identify gaps and mend existing training programs, including the basics for sales managers. Joanne Wells of Halogen Software suggests looking at what your sales leaders know about your business and its goals. By understanding your broader business objectives leaders are better placed to hone in on what's most important for their sales reps to learn.

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Holding knee-jerk training sessions that exist in isolation rarely achieve the desired results. So if learning and coaching are integral parts of your organization they need to be part of your culture. This means learning is valued, supported and encouraged from the top all the way down. The first step is to build the basics for your managers by clarifying responsibilities in job descriptions, performance appraisals and broader communications, making it crystal clear that this is an organization wide initiative.

Once clarified, you can now create an environment where there is a regular cadence for learning and coaching. An easy place to start is by looking at your best managers and identifying what they're doing well. There's no need to recreate the wheel, replicate what works.

Everyone has to start somewhere, and today there are so many tools available that can be used to help your organization build its culture of learning. Think about it this way, if managers are given a structured and effective way to coach their reps regularly they're more likely to use it, right? But if you have to take everyone out of the field for a week, there's little incentive for anyone to get involved.

The key to making the most of a sales manager's time is to distribute coaching in a way that means managers are not solely responsible. Not to overburden managers with coaching, advocate coaching as an organizational culture. Involve subject matter experts in Product Marketing or Sales Enablement to coach reps in their areas of expertise. After all sales coaching is a team effort. Product Marketing and Sales Enablement can conduct coaching on knowledge and messaging, like how to pitch that new product feature for example.

This effectively elevates the role of the sales manager so they can focus on the more complex deals and performance issues, optimizing their time and skills. But even with sufficient time to coach, you first need to identify whether your managers have the requisite skills to coach effectively.

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The best way to ensure managers have the knowledge and skills to coach is to give them formal training. There are many ways this can be done, from formal in-class training to peer to peer learning. Certifying managers to coach isn't a new concept.

In a different world, football coaches have to be certified before they get to coach players. In fact, the process for certifying a football coach is thorough, with several levels depending on the experience of the coach and the level of the players they're seeking to coach. The same should be practiced for sales coaches.

One of the most effective ways we've seen is when managers are given the same information and knowledge as their reps and are then certified on it. This ensures they have the same baseline knowledge, and the certification gives comfort that they have absorbed the information and are able to apply it.

For example, one of our customers, a high growth tech company was launching a new product and wanted to ensure their sales team delivered a consistent message to prospects. To enable their sales managers to coach sales reps through this they first certified them on how to sell the product themselves. This ensured that they knew exactly what the reps had to do, and when combined with their own experience and skills were prepared to coach their teams effectively.

When this approach is complemented with guidance on how to coach, it can be quite powerful. Provide live examples to managers on how to conduct coaching conversations. Help them understand what they should be looking for and what areas to focus in on for the greatest impact. Provide them with the opportunity to role play their coaching so they can play it back and learn from it.

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Another way to learn coaching is to learn from peers. Your sales reps buddy up, so why not do the same for your sales managers. With role models to help mentor and demonstrate good practice, managers will be able to ask questions and share their own knowledge with their peers.

While mentoring and buddying is usually a one-on-one activity, you can encourage collaboration and peer-to-peer learning amongst the management team by bringing them together. Some of our customers have organized manager workshops that give sales managers the opportunity to share what works and what doesn't in a supportive and collaborative environment.

It's also a great idea to encourage managers to share their coaching wins with the broader sales team. This has a dual impact of allowing the broader sales organisation to learn from what works, and also demonstrating the value of coaching to any skeptics in your team.

If your organization has a sales coaching culture then your Regional Director and Vice President of Sales will no doubt be interested in how your sales managers are performing. Rather than observing from afar, they should be encouraged to see how managers are coaching regularly and provide their own feedback and insight to the broader team or even individuals where appropriate. By getting involved they can demonstrate just how important the sales coaching program is to the success of their sales team, and boost engagement in the process with the team.

Along with executive buy-in, rewards and incentives are another good way to engage managers. While successful sales managers are incentivized when their team meets quota, how often are good sales coaches recognized or incentivized? Consider adding in a coaching specific incentive in your KPIs so there is added encouragement for those who learn how to coach well. The benefits will inevitably flow-on to the rest of their team.

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Identifying What to Coach On

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Track the right data for effective coaching

All the training and practicing in the world won't be of any use to a sales manager if they're going into their coaching sessions blind. That's where good reporting on the right things is critical.

Whether you're a fast-growing-startup or a large enterprise you have one number to chase; revenue. While revenue is a good indicator of how your sales team 'has' performed, it doesn't really give you any idea how they're performing 'right now', or whether you're going to make your revenue number in six months from now. Revenue doesn't provide you with any insights into how your salespeople actually sell, and gives you no way to control or change how they can create more revenue.

This leaves sales leaders open to massive risk. If you're not sure on how you're making your number, it may take lot more of your time to identify the right market trends, analyze your competition and understand falling sales behavior. Being a sales leader is like being a jockey. While the racehorse is steaming full speed ahead, you need to be looking for potential threats and dangers in every direction.

Don't get us wrong, revenue is still the most important indicator of success but it alone is not enough. In this digital age, the way people buy has changed, and we need to look at how we run sales differently in order to adapt. It's no longer enough to rely solely on lagging indicators because your competitors and buyers will have moved on by the time you realize something's not working. That's where efficiency and effectiveness indicators are important.

HOW WE CURRENTLY INSPECT/MEASURE

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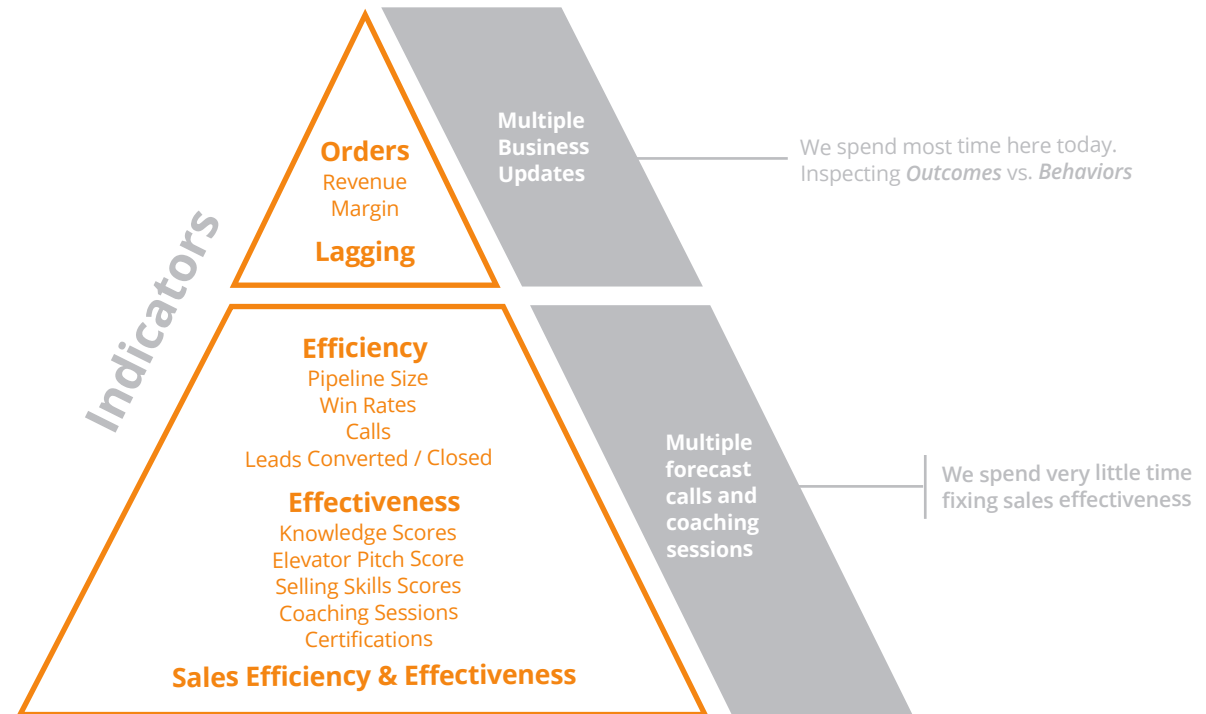
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Indicators that help you achieve predictable revenue will ensure that you always know what that figure will be each month, quarter and year. To achieve predictable revenue you first need to understand how your salespeople actually sell, what works and what doesn't. To identify and track this it's necessary to look at different indicators; efficiency and effectiveness indicators. Efficiency and effectiveness indicators can be tracked using sales readiness tools (like MindTickle) and customer engagement tools (like Showpad and Seismic).

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With this information in hand they are then enabled to identify what specific areas individual reps require coaching in, and start working on improving their behaviors and result.

- 1. Lagging indicators:** These indicate whether the reps are meeting their numbers and include a lot of the traditional metrics like revenue and margin. These metrics are commonly measured.
- 2. Efficiency indicators:** These provide an understanding of whether sales reps are meeting or missing their numbers. This can include win rates, sales cycles and pipeline. These are very critical for the success of your business. For example, in a CPG business, the right product placement is the most important efficiency indicator. Whereas in Technology the right discovery process may be an important efficiency indicator. Businesses who not only understand their efficiency indicators but are able to maximize their reps achievement of it will achieve success.
- 3. Effectiveness indicators:** These metrics looks at what behaviors actually drive your lagging indicators. Things like certifications, coaching, articulation of elevator pitch and knowledge are key here. Managers need to proactively identify capability gaps and fix them. A streamlined process for managers to build capabilities in their team could be the difference between an average and best-in-class team.

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This information can be identified by bringing together information from several places, whether it's in your CRM, your sales readiness software or competitive intel. The key is giving managers the tools that helps them identify which indicators to look at and access to the information. For example, if you're looking at which effectiveness indicators are helpful to win deals, your sales readiness software (like MindTickle) can provide you with information on which content your best reps are accessing before a big meeting. This may provide data about what behaviors are winning deals, and in turn what behaviors may need to change in order to improve the results of some of your reps.

In the past sales managers focussed all their efforts on lagging and efficiency indicators to enable their team. But businesses have changed, the way we make our products has changed and the speed at which industry dynamics alter is radically different. To drive revenue in the new world order managers need to look at the effectiveness of each element of their leading indicators and identify their importance for sales success. By focusing in on capabilities and behavior, managers can coach their reps better, drive revenue and increase sales productivity.

A multitude of reports and meetings are dedicated to order reviews and pipeline management, but how often do sales managers review their sales rep's behaviors?

Who is beating their quota? What are they doing well that the other reps aren't? What knowledge and skill gaps do their individual reps have? Are their reps following the correct process?

Just like sales managers get regular reporting on lagging indicators, they also need access to information on their teams' effectiveness indicators and their gaps.

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Efficiency and effectiveness indicators

A leading indicator is one that can change before the final outcome is achieved, which means it can actually provide an indication of what the final outcome (ie. your revenue) will be. The metrics that are tracked are efficiency and effectiveness indicators. Traditionally companies have mostly tracked efficiency indicators. But market dynamics are changing and it's no longer enough to just be efficient. Modern sales organizations also need to be effective to succeed.

Effectiveness is about ensuring your sales reps "get it". They not only have the requisite knowledge of their products or services, but their skills are developed enough to have meaningful customer interactions, consistently. They do this by measuring the individual activities that contribute to achieving your end goal.

Sales effectiveness indicators will help you achieve predictable revenue. These in turn drive your efficiency indicators and create the foundation that supports the achievement of your lagging indicators.

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Productivity = Efficiency x Effectiveness

Measuring efficiency is relatively easy as so much work has been put towards this objective. It's always the first line of defence when trying to improve productivity (ie. determining how to enable your reps to do more). There are several metrics that can be used to measure this, for example:

- Number of calls / meetings held
- Number of opportunities added to pipeline / CRM
- Number of proposals / quotes submitted
- % of leads converted to opportunities
- % of opportunities converted to close
- Average deal size per rep
- Time from pipeline to quota
- % of forecast achieved

Depending on your business objectives you might choose to measure the ones that are most relevant to you. But there's only so much more your reps can do. Eventually you'll reach a point where optimizing efficiency actually produces less returns or even results in a decline in productivity.

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That's why measuring and managing sales effectiveness is crucial in improving your rep's ability to meet their numbers. Some examples of effectiveness metrics are:

- Product knowledge
- Elevator pitch
- Negotiation and challenger scores
- Social selling skills
- Competitive knowledge
- Objection handling
- Number of coaching sessions
- Number of training certifications completed

These indicators have historically been challenging to measure, but MindTickle's sales readiness software now facilitates this. It enables these crucial indicators to be tracked and measured in a way that is transparent and objective. And more importantly, it has become easy to correlate effectiveness to sales revenue.

So if you can track how effective and efficient your sales team is, you can achieve predictable revenue. If things are going off track, you'll be alerted in advance, before it affects your topline revenue. This gives you the opportunity to rectify it and avert disaster. So while your senior management is focused in on the revenue number, sales leaders need to look to their efficiency and effective indicators to ensure they meet it.

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Provide a structure to coaching

For coaching to be effective it needs to be targeted. Targeted coaching (using a scientific approach) ensures your reps develop the capabilities to become successful. The first step in creating a sales coaching process is to identify objectively what specific areas your individual reps need to be coached on. Then you need to determine the best way to coach your reps, rather than just telling them their gaps.

High-performance sales teams and sales coaching best practices go hand in hand. But sales coaching is often driven by managers who don't have the time, tools, skills or data to coach effectively. And in most cases, it's implemented in a haphazard manner that reflects the sales manager's own personal whims and biases.

By putting in place a central system with predefined coaching workflows you can ensure that your sales managers receive the guidance they need to coach effectively and stay on plan. Technology gives you a highly scalable approach to rapidly identify, build, and sustain the targeted coaching needed to continuously improve performance and deliver impact. This will ultimately lead to more predictable sales behaviours and revenue.

As stated in the earlier chapters, sales coaching isn't an ad-hoc or one size fits all activity. That's why it's important to have a plan that outlines which capabilities need to be developed and what role different stakeholders will play in the process to ensure their sales coaching is effective.

The first step towards structuring your sales coaching is to have a sales coaching plan. Typically there are three parts to a sales coaching plan – knowledge, skill and process. Depending on what your businesses is, you'll weight each of these attributes differently and may assign coaching accountability to different stakeholders.

A sales readiness platform like MindTickle helps you define rules and automate processes around coaching – triggering a coaching event, facilitating manager and salesperson interaction, and driving visibility to different stakeholders through analytics.

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Make collaboration easier

While it's always great to collaborate in person, that's near impossible when you've got sales people all over the country. Rather than wait months until your next sales kickoff you can use technology to coach your reps. For example, our Product Manager Daniel sits in San Francisco and provides coaching to our rep Beverlie in Boston directly through our sales readiness platform. Workflows are set up to remind our experts to provide their feedback promptly and our sales rep receives it directly on her mobile device.

This process also works at a large scale as one of our customers has found. With over 700 sales reps distributed across the world, they're able to provide specialist coaching to each rep on three capabilities they've identified – selling skills, demo and account based demand generation. For each capability they've identified specific areas that reps need to excel at. They also have subject matter experts to coach reps on each scenario through role plays and on the job coaching.

Another example is ForeScout who uses technology to help managers and SMEs collaborate during their sales onboarding process. In a process which they call it as "Pitch Back", they leverage MindTickle by having reps record practice pitches so their experts can hear how they're using their onboarding knowledge in sales calls. The experts and managers can then provide feedback and coaching to the rep in real time through the app.

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Make stakeholders accountable

Workflows not only make it easier to collaborate, but they also hold everyone in the process accountable. For example, by allocating coaching modules to each sales rep you can ensure that everyone's needs are covered. Managers typically focus on lagging indicators and tactical coaching but do not focus much time on strategic skill development. The middle 60% can really benefit by getting coaching on core capabilities. In fact, research has found that it's in the middle 60% where sales coaching can have its biggest impact on performance. Technology can provide a simple way to check that all reps are being given the attention they require, and that coaching is having the maximum effect possible.

A technology platform like MindTickle provides relevant stakeholders with contextual notifications, coaching tasks and visibility over the progress that is being made by reps and managers in the coaching process. Transparency is key to the process and technology facilitates this.

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Enable peer to peer learning

Coaching isn't just about learning from your manager, it's also about developing sales skills by finding out how the best do it. That's why sharing best practices across your organization is important. This is easier if you have a small sales team and everyone is located in the same office. But what do you do if you have a distributed field sales team or a large inside sales team?

The best way to facilitate (and automate) peer to peer learning is by leveraging technology. A technology platform like MindTickle makes identifying expert knowledge and sharing it with a large sales team seamless and automated.

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Share success stories

Watching role plays and pitches is just one way the reps can learn from each other. Success stories are another effective way to motivate and inspire your reps. There are several advantages to reps sharing how they won that big deal or closed a challenging sale.

- It cross-pollinates proven techniques across geographical boundaries
- It builds a sales culture that encourages sharing and learning
- It gives a great ego boost to the successful rep

By leveraging technology, you can ensure that your sales reps are given the best opportunity to be successful. Technology provides not only structure and accountability, but also enables your sales managers to make decisions about what their reps need to be coached on and even facilitates how they are coached. This increases your reps confidence so they're ready to have those difficult conversations with customers.

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Coach the 8 types of sales reps

In Chapter 1 we talked about the research published by Harvard Business Review that identified eight types of sales reps. Here we take you through each type of rep and identify specific coaching opportunities to help them each develop.

1. EXPERTS

Natural salespeople, Experts know what they're doing and customers love them.

Coaching opportunities: Stepping up to mentor their peers and share their best practices is a growth opportunity for Experts.

2. CLOSERS

They can close a deal, but these smooth talkers can turn off customers

Coaching opportunities: Focusing coaching on soft skills can help Closers improve their selling style and keep them engaged and motivated.

3. CONSULTANTS

These problem solvers listen to their customers well, but overlook case studies that can help them extract more sales value.

Coaching Opportunities: Focus in on how they interact with customers, engage in storytelling that can help them build deeper relationships.

4. STORYTELLERS

With the gift of the gab, Storytellers could sell ice to the eskimos but they often lack efficiency and structure in their selling process.

Coaching Opportunities: By helping a Storyteller focus on their meeting agenda, set themselves targets and improve self awareness they can close more deals quicker.

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5. AGGRESSORS

They may win the deal, but their aggressive approach towards price can put some customers offside.

Coaching Opportunities: Aggressors can improve their sales results by rounding out their skills so they focus on value more than price. Coaching on soft skills may also help them build stronger rapport with their customers.

6. FOCUSERS

No one knows their product better than a Focuser, but their lack of confidence can make it challenging for them to identify what their buyer really needs.

Coaching Opportunities: Focusers can benefit from coaching that helps them identify an opportunity, understand their customer's pain points and articulate the correct value proposition.

7. SOCIALIZERS

Everyone loves a socializer, but the pleasant chit chat can get in the way of making a sale.

Coaching Opportunities: Moving from a good rapport to talking business is a behavior that can be improved by setting short term targets and close guidance. Socializers may also need help understanding their sales funnels, to make the most of the opportunities they have.

8. NARRATORS

A good sales script can be a useful guide or a hindrance. For Narrators its a case of the latter, where they feel lost without a script.

Coaching Opportunities: Customer conversations are rarely scripted, so Narrators require coaching that helps them understand their customers, tailor a pitch to meet their needs and handle objections confidently.

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Address the needs of millennials

Millennials are set to represent 75% of the global population by 2025. While they might be the youngest people in your business, they are by no means the most junior. Millennial managers and CEOs are now commonplace, the latter particularly in startups and technology. It's well established that Gen X and Baby Boomer's value career development and job satisfaction. Similarly, millennials have distinct behaviors and work preferences, which is why they need specific training and coaching to help them perform better on the field.

To develop a coaching program that addresses the unique preferences of millennials, it's important to understand how their behavior differs from other generations. This then impacts how to coach them, and even their propensity to be coached.

We've identified seven imperatives to be taken into account while structuring a coaching program for your millennial salespeople.

Let's dive deeper into each of these and outline how they impact your sales coaching program.



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Tie coaching to technology

By far the most distinguishing feature of millennials is the ease with which they understand and prefer to use technology. They'll reject clunky antiquated systems in favor of convenient and intuitive technology. For millennials, being connected at all times is essential, in fact, 83% sleep with their smartphone by their bed.

While many millennials are comfortable socializing in person, they're adept at using online mediums to enhance relationships and broaden their reach. So don't be surprised if your millennial sales rep prefers to email customers rather than calling them.

MILLENNIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS TECHNOLOGY



MILLENNIALS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING



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How does this impact coaching?

- Leveraging sales readiness technology is no longer a nice-to-have, it's essential. Your millennial reps will demand that it be easy to use, accessible and helpful to perform their job. Without each of these factors, your reps may simply choose not to use your tools, and some may even find new ones to use. Keeping your millennial reps well-connected can pay dividends, in fact, our customers have found that 36% of their millennial reps choose to engage with information voluntarily outside of work hours.
- Millennials preference to leverage technology may impact their ability to communicate with customers in other ways. This means they may require some back-to-basics coaching on how to develop relationships in person, from maintaining eye contact to opening a conversation. If some of your buyer personas are not millennials then this could also include coaching them on how to address generational preferences in customer conversations, and in particular when it's appropriate to use technology and when it's not. For example, baby boomer customers may prefer speaking to someone in person over email communication.

Keep content brief

Millennials are often depicted as having short attention spans when really they prefer consuming bite-sized information in short intervals. So when it comes to training, rather than sitting for hours in a classroom, your reps are more likely to consume bite-sized information. This addresses both a preference for crisp communication and accessing information on their mobile device.

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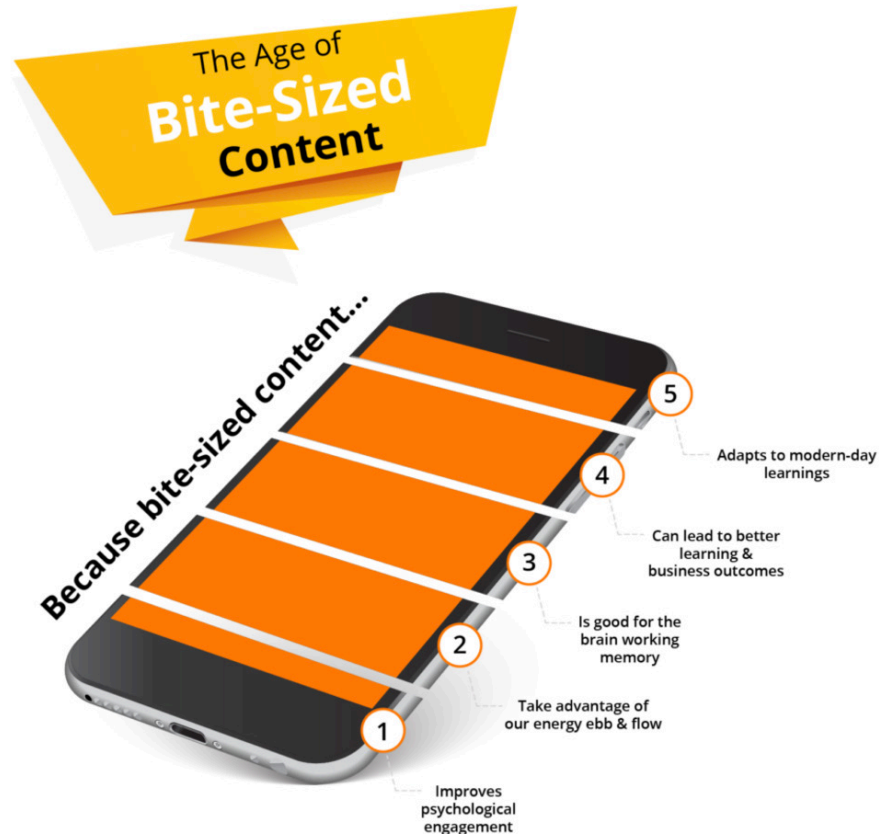
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Millennials are also expert multi-taskers, they're often listening to podcasts while answering emails. Their proficiency in managing multiple tasks makes them experts at consuming information in different ways than previous generations.

How does this impact coaching?

- Keep coaching sessions short but regular. Rather than conducting one-on-one coaching marathons just once in awhile, coach your reps regularly but in shorter intervals.

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Engage them, don't just manage them

Collaboration is one of the best ways to engage a millennial salesperson. They value learning from others and working as part of a team. They like to learn and solve problems by hearing success stories and working in teams. Millennials believe in sharing their wisdom and experiences as well, which provides a great opportunity for other teammates to learn from them.

Another way to engage them is by using gamification to encourage some healthy competition. In fact, 79% of learners believe their learning is more productive when introduced in a gamified environment. As self-starters, don't be surprised if your millennial salespeople demand access to data so that they can gauge their own performance and plug their own knowledge gaps.

How does this impact coaching?

- Leverage success stories and other tools to help reps learn from their peers. Practically understanding how others have approached a problem and then practising it in a role play may even be more effective than being verbally trained by their manager.
- Make coaching a team effort by providing online collaboration tools that allow your "A players" and seasoned reps to share their experiences. This can be facilitated through a sales readiness platform so it doesn't matter where your experts and reps are based. After all, millennials are comfortable conversing with people online, regardless of their location.
- Gamify the experience wherever possible so that reps can compete against each other, and even themselves.
- Be transparent with your data. By giving your reps access to their data you enable them to identify their own gaps and allow them to suggest areas they would like to be coached on. When reps buy into their own coaching plan they'll put their heart and soul into it, refining their own knowledge and skills.

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Ensure coaching is driven by their values

Millennials have grown up in an era where political correctness and social awareness is high. This permeates into their personal values, seeking out opportunities that add real value and have a social impact. They expect a lot from their life and their employers and like to see their work reflected in the bigger picture. They have opinions and aren't afraid of expressing them, but are also open to hearing other perspectives and taking onboard feedback.

How does this impact coaching?

- When coaching millennial sales reps be sure to explain the value in what you're doing. They need to see where they are going and how it will make an impact on their performance and the broader business.
- Take a values-driven approach by asking your reps what they value. This will help them incorporate this view into their feedback and long-term coaching plan.

Consider their expectations at all times

Millennials aren't used to waiting for anything. They've always been able to access everything at the touch of a button, so don't expect them to wait patiently for career progression either.

As self-starters, they'll happily take responsibility for their own development if they know what to expect and how to achieve it.. In fact, research has found that people between 25 and 34 are more likely to express gratitude for "being satisfied with an existing job" than they are about "spending quality time with family and friends." So harness their desire to enjoy their work and perform it well.

How does this impact coaching?

- Rather than coaching a specific issue in isolation, use a structured approach to providing millennials with a clear roadmap for their development. This not only helps you structure a coaching program but also gives your reps transparency about what they need to achieve in order to progress.

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Give them agility and freedom

Millennials have been quick to embrace, and in many instances have driven, the death of the standard workday. But just because your reps may not begin and end their working day in normal office hours doesn't mean they don't work just as hard. In fact, our customer data shows that 27% of millennial users access and engage with the MindTickle platform between the hours of 8 pm and midnight, and 4% even access it on Sundays.

Other research indicates that millennials stress and worry about their work more than other age groups. But thankfully they are also driven to find ways to overcome these issues. The flexibility to work when it suits them can be challenging to manage, but it shouldn't impact your ability to coach your millennial sales reps when they need it, whatever the time.

How does this impact coaching?

- Leverage online coaching tools that are accessible whenever and wherever. This gives your reps the flexibility to manage their time as they please, and still receive feedback from you without having to be physically present for a one-on-one coaching session.
- If you would like to have some oversight into your reps activities, sales readiness software like MindTickle allows you to see when and how your reps are accessing coaching tools and content. This can even be used as an additional coaching point when this data is overlaid with sales information.

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Leverage their willingness to receive feedback and recognition

The millennial generation was raised in an era where praise and reward are valued, so naturally, they value recognition in the workplace. But along with the need to be recognized is the understanding that feedback is part of the process. This makes them more open to giving and receiving feedback, and willing to apply it so that they can achieve further rewards.

How does this impact coaching?

- As coaching often provides immediate feedback it may be more readily embraced by your millennial reps. When the feedback gives them visibility into their own progress and is linked to things they value, your millennial reps are more likely to take on board coaching and use it to succeed quicker.
- To make your feedback easier to digest, it's important to ensure that it's directly relevant to your reps performance. It's also helpful to deliver it in bite-sized pieces, so that specific issues can be readily addressed.

By reviewing and tailoring your approach to coach, you'll not only help your millennial reps become better salespeople but also ensure that you retain them.

It's also worth noting, that just because many of these techniques are directed towards the behaviors and values of your millennial reps, it doesn't mean that your entire multi-generational workforce won't benefit from them. It may take some time for some of your staff to get used to technology, but these modern coaching methods improve engagement, foster collaboration and enable remote workers to have the same level of development as their head office counterparts. While some may long for the good old classroom days and in-person feedback, most will appreciate the benefits and flexibility that technology provides them.

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By effectively coaching your sales force, you will ensure your team has the knowledge, sales skills and execution discipline at their moment of truth, when they're having customer conversations. This will in turn ensure your business achieves predictable revenue.

With the learnings from this guide you can now:

- 1 Understand why sales coaching is a business imperative now
- 2 Develop an effective coaching plan for your sales organization
- 3 Identify what resources and tools you need to design your coaching plan
- 4 Understand how to identify areas you should be coaching different members of your sales team on
- 5 Understand the importance of managers in the coaching process
- 6 Ensure all relevant stakeholders are accountable for their role in the coaching process
- 7 Identify how to coach different team members more effectively

IT'S TIME TO COACH YOUR SALES REPS TO SUCCESS!
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