

7 Crucial Questions You Must Ask About Sales Training

How to Avoid Disappointment and Get Sales Revenue Impact From Training

Sales training is a multi-million dollar industry – but many companies are surprised and disappointed by the poor results.

This is especially the case at companies who sell complex or costly solutions.

Here are the questions to ask to make sure that the training you are considering will deliver the impact you want and the results you deserve.

by Ken Wax

Introduction

Ken Wax & Associates has completed over 200 sales training workshops for companies such as IBM, Monster, Accenture and many others including mid-sized and startups.

Each workshop has been different - each carefully customized to fit the specific needs and goals of the individual executives who bring us in. Because we've learned that generic sales training just doesn't work.

In the course of our experience, we have identified 7 crucial questions that we recommend asking of any sales trainer or sales training company that you may consider.

Some of these questions are simple - but as you will see, the answers you get can be very revealing. Some of them are more complex. All of them must be answered to your satisfaction before you invest the considerable time, resources and dollars in sales training.

For more information on Ken Wax and our approach to sales training, please see the last page of this report.

1. Is the Sales Training Inward-facing or Customer-facing?

The first question to ask is if the training is focused on a process – the perfect steps your company would like all prospects to follow.

That may sound good on paper, but it rarely works in the real world.

Customers don't care about your selling process; they have their own buying process. (Plus, every one of your competitors also wants them to take ideal steps – their ideal steps.)

To impact sales revenue, training must focus on what customers experience -- and what leads them to want to take action. Only customer-facing sales training teaches your salespeople ways to get inside your customer's head and how to create the motivation that delivers more sales and shorter cycles.

2. Is It Generic or Specific to Your Sale?

Most sales training talks in generalities (*“Find the power person.”*, *“Make sure your contact understands your value proposition.”*).

Customers, however, don’t respond to generalities. They can only be affected by what your salespeople say and do. To a salesperson, generic advice simply is not actionable.

The only way to increase sales is to bring each salesperson ideas and techniques that are on-target for your sale. That’s why every minute of your workshop should be focused on your real-world selling situations.

3. Theoretical or Use-It-Tomorrow Practical?

Theory is relatively easy to teach. But don't expect it to impact sales revenue – no businessperson ever moved a sale ahead because the salesperson knew theory.

Sales training has to be practical – focused on skills that your team can put to work with customers immediately.

For a sales training workshop to be effective, the teachings must be practical, so the impact can begin literally the very next day, and on every sales interaction thereafter.

4. Who is the Trainer?

In some fields, any trainer can teach any subject and students will comply. That's not the case when it comes to selling.

As you well know, salespeople are a demanding bunch. They rarely change their ways just because someone with slides and a workbook tells them to.

Most sales training is led by a 'facilitator'. He or she may know their methodology and buzzwords, but they don't know selling. In fact, your salespeople probably have far greater selling knowledge and experience than that trainer has.

Salespeople only embrace new selling skills when taught by someone they respect because of that person's credentials, expertise and vast experience.

Salespeople are immediately (and rightfully) suspicious of trainers who merely talk the talk. If that person hasn't led teams like theirs and achieved in the field of selling, their effectiveness is always limited.

When Ken Wax leads a seminar or workshop, salespeople benefit from his work with thousands of salespeople and his ability to bring useful examples they can put into action immediately.

5. Are the Exercises Relevant or Useless?

Believe it or not, most sales training have imaginary exercises – they’re completely irrelevant to your company or sale.

Your salespeople are expected to spend time ‘selling’ a fictitious product to a non-existent prospect at an equally fictitious company. After doing that, they’re expected to spend more time discussing and voting about which group did that the best.

Why? Because it is easy; trainers don’t need to know anything about your customers, competitors, or actual selling situations.

Don’t accept this. Your sales training should have your people practicing and honing new approaches for selling *your* products, against *your* competition, in *your* real-world selling situations.

When Ken Wax leads a workshop, that’s what happens. Every exercise is about your specific sale and interactions.

For example, one of the most popular and effective exercises in our workshops is having sales people come up with three relevant story-examples from their existing customers.

They practice presenting them in a short story-like form that prospects can easily understand, relate to, and repeat to others. This seemingly simple exercise arms salespeople with powerful new tools in finding opportunities and accelerating the sale.

6. Can My Salespeople Ask Questions?

Usually, *they can't*. That's right -- most sales training won't allow any questions about your specific sale.

That's because of two reasons:

1. The trainer's expertise is in the methodology – so only questions about the slides are allowed.
2. The training company hasn't invested the time to learn about your product, your company, your customers and your specific challenges.

As you can imagine, once the salespeople discover this, their attention plummets.

The problem is - most executives only find out about this once the training session starts. So you may want to ask about this issue, using the following approach:

“My salespeople often have questions about their specific sales situations, or when they go up against competitors. How much time will be allotted for their questions, and how much will the trainer know about our sale and our specific competition?”

Ken Wax's seminars and workshops are just the opposite of 'no questions' training – we encourage salespeople to ask about their toughest selling situations – and they learn new ways to win more often.

7. What's the Real ROI Going to Be?

You wouldn't make a major business purchase without knowing the return-on-investment.

You shouldn't spend thousands of dollars on sales training without asking the same question.

With most sales training, despite big promises beforehand, little changes the next day. Salespeople put that thick binder up on the shelf and go back to doing the exact same things they were doing before spending days in a classroom.

It's no wonder that sales revenue doesn't increase. Nothing changed. No one learned anything they could put into action with real customers in real interactions.

Just the opposite is true with training that is:

Tailored precisely to your sale,

Led by a credentialed expert who teaches specifics

Focused on learning and honing skills that can be used immediately in real-world selling situations.

If your goal is to increase your return-on-investment and make an immediate impact on sales, contact Ken Wax to learn what the right sales training can accomplish for you.

Call 781-444-5506 or e-mail kwax@kenwax.com.

Learn more at www.kenwax.com

About the Author

Ken Wax has led technology sales teams and held executive positions at companies ranging from startups to industry giants. He has trained salespeople from Microsoft to Monster.com, from IBM to Accenture, and has written over 120 magazine articles published around the world.

Ken has also written the book, *"The Technology Salesperson's Handbook"*, and has been the keynote speaker at dozens of conferences on five continents.

"Ken Wax has a keen teaching ability, and is an inspirational speaker and motivator as well."

– John Dagoon, Novell

"Ken's teachings were instrumental in winning more than 120 new accounts."

– Greg Lazar, ATG

"Many of our channel partners became millionaires because of Ken Wax."

– Don Bulens, IBM

"Ken Wax is a salesman's salesman. His expertise and vast experiences in different industries helped my teams exceed our sales targets even during difficult economic times."

– Brian Corey, Monster Worldwide

"I've hosted over 10 training programs in my career and Ken Wax is the most effective sales trainer I've ever worked with."

– Darren Johnson, Adobe