

Essential Guide to Virtual Sales Training

How to Avoid 5 Common Pitfalls





Virtual sales training can help your organization upskill your team while matching the cadence of today's dynamic sales cycle. But implementing a virtual sales training program can be fraught with challenges.

Here at The Brooks Group, we have seen sales training initiatives fail due to a variety of pitfalls. This guide offers practical advice and suggestions to help you avoid these virtual sales training obstacles.

5 Common Pitfalls of Virtual Sales Training

1. Failure to get the full support of the executive suite.
2. Failure to secure adequate funding.
3. Failure to solicit input from members of the sales team.
4. Failure to include sales managers in the training initiative.
5. Failure to incorporate ongoing reinforcement.



Virtual Training: Delivering Sales Skills, Knowledge, and Confidence

Traditionally, sales training has been synonymous with product training. In fact, research shows 40% of sales training focuses on developing product knowledge. Additional research reveals a mere 10% of sales training addresses questioning and listening skills—which are both essential skills for sales success.

Simply put, product knowledge alone is not sufficient. To be successful in today's competitive environment, sellers must be keenly aware of how their product addresses the specific needs and wants of their customers (and it doesn't hurt to be in command of Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and other virtual sales tools).

While an understanding of product is important, the only way to truly understand how to recommend any solution for a customer's needs is by asking the right questions and listening to a prospect's responses. Sales training that teaches sellers how to be customer-focused advisors rather than product "pitch people" includes these two skills—and others.

Here are five common obstacles to effective virtual sales training and how to overcome them.

1. Failure to get the full support of the executive suite.

Buy-in by company leadership is not only required; it's absolutely essential. Sales is the "lifeblood" of any company.

Leadership must understand how critical sales training is to the success of their company.

However, some executives tend to side with the department from which they came. In other words, a CEO with an engineering background will tend to believe engineering is the most important side of the house. Another, with a financial background, will see that function as being the most essential.

By the same logic, an organization led by executives with a sales background will lean into the sales department. In many cases, that leader believes in the importance of the sales function more readily than some others.



However, another potential problem arises with these leaders: These executives may not support sales training if they sold many years ago and have "old school" views of what selling is all about. Or worse, if they were "naturals" who were gifted at sales and can't understand why someone would need to be trained to do something "so easy."

Each executive must be "sold" on the value of sales training.

2. Failure to secure adequate funding.

Virtual sales training is not something that can be implemented without a financial investment. Unfortunately, many organizations attempt to train on the cheap. They develop a sales training program on their own or expect their entire team to be transformed by attending a brief webinar. Rarely do either of these approaches work.

Effective virtual sales training is more cost effective than in-person training.

That's a painful realization for many budget-conscious organizations, particularly when every resource is being closely scrutinized. But, without significant investment, it's simply impossible to develop an effective training program with long-term benefits.

The other side of the coin is more comforting. According to both anecdotal evidence and hard data, virtual sales training—when properly launched, implemented, and reinforced—has significant impact on the bottom line.



Virtual training is actually more cost effective than in-person training. Organizations avoid the expense of travel and other logistics of gathering a dispersed team. Virtual training fits more easily into busy schedules and minimizes time away from selling. When adequately funded, the ROI more than covers any up-front cost.

In short: If it's done wrong, your virtual sales training investment will be the most expensive mistake you've ever made. If done properly, however, it will be the best thing you've ever do.

3. Failure to solicit input from members of the sales team.

Just as your executives need to understand the importance of sales training, sellers must also be shown how important it is. Human beings, by their very nature, resist change. Changing seller behavior is not easy, and new approaches require some adjustment.



Sellers must see how much virtual sales training can benefit not only their organization, but also their individual incomes and sales numbers. You can get buy-in from the sales team if you involve them early in the development of the training. It's important for sellers to have more to do with the program than simply "showing up" to be taught.

An important aspect of getting the support of your sales team is maximizing the value of their training time. For most sellers, this means seeing how much it can do for their individual incomes or sales numbers, in whatever way those numbers are calculated.

This is a very real concern for sellers because the only real inventory a seller has is time. It's essential that every second of sales training provides measurable results. And, with a new generation of virtual and self-paced learning options, training can be delivered in dynamic and digestible chunks—allowing sales training results to be measured.

Every minute sellers spend doing something other than selling must in some way help them sell better.

4. Failure to include sales managers in the training initiative.

Too often we see virtual sales training initiatives fail because organizations believe they'll see positive changes simply by training the sellers. In fact, it's essential to train their managers right alongside them. An important component of the virtual sales training effort must be geared toward the unique requirements of sales leadership.

If a sales team learns a new principle, and sales managers are not made aware of how to coach or develop their sellers around that new principle, their training won't have its full impact.

For example, consider the sales team at an organization we'll call XYZ Industries. Let's say those sellers participate in virtual sales training at which they learn a new sales process. It's a consultative selling process proven to increase closing rates by more than 50%.



But the sales leaders aren't given a sales management-specific version of training in the process.

How can they manage the process? How can they coach to the process? How will they bring new hires up to speed quickly within the framework of the process?

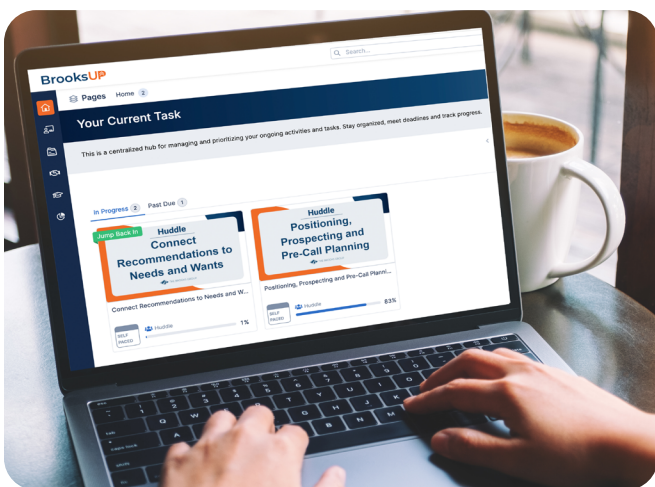
Training sales managers is an essential driver of the ongoing success of any virtual training initiative.

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5. Failure to incorporate ongoing reinforcement.

Training can't stop at the classroom door or when the video conference ends; it must be reinforced in the field. Research shows that sales training including additional follow-up and reinforcement is far more effective than training that occurs in a vacuum.



Gartner research found that B2B sales reps forget 70% of the information they learn within a week of training, and 87% will forget it within a month.

Modern virtual sales training programs include an online element—like the BrooksUP™ eLearning platform—that follows training and delivers reinforcement over time. This provides opportunities for ongoing practice and exercises that strengthen and refresh the most impactful elements of training.

Participants have an opportunity to apply knowledge between and after training sessions, which improves retention. This “spacing effect” links retention to repeated exposure to information. Studies show that using spaced retention helps us remember about 80% of what we learn beyond 60 days.

Virtual training will not be as successful if it's a one-time event. Common sense and decades of research leave no doubt that lasting changes in behavior occur over time.

Successful virtual sales training reinforces what's taught in the classroom.

Virtual Training for Long-Term Sales Success

Training a sales team is no easy task, and an effective program cannot be developed in a vacuum. Make sure you avoid these five pitfalls when designing your virtual sales training program. [Contact The Brooks Group](#) to find a strategic partner to assist in the development of your virtual sales training program.

About The Brooks Group

Unlocking sales team potential for over 45 years, The Brooks Group is the leading sales training and development company empowering sales teams to generate breakthrough results. To learn more about our suite of ROI-driven sales training and development programs, best-in-class assessments, and industry-leading reinforcement tools, visit brooksgroup.com.

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