

## Executive Overview

Why should you consider *coaching* the sales team against a defined *process* as opposed to "traditional" Sales Training? This study pulls together a number of concepts based on our experience in the field and studies done within sales teams who have benefited enormously from systematic training. After reading this study you should have a clear understanding of the issues that influence training decisions. You will understand the dynamics of delivering consistent return from training and the vital role played by the front line sales manager/supervisor in effective delivery. Implementation of a formal sales process - then coaching compliance to the process - will drive substantial;

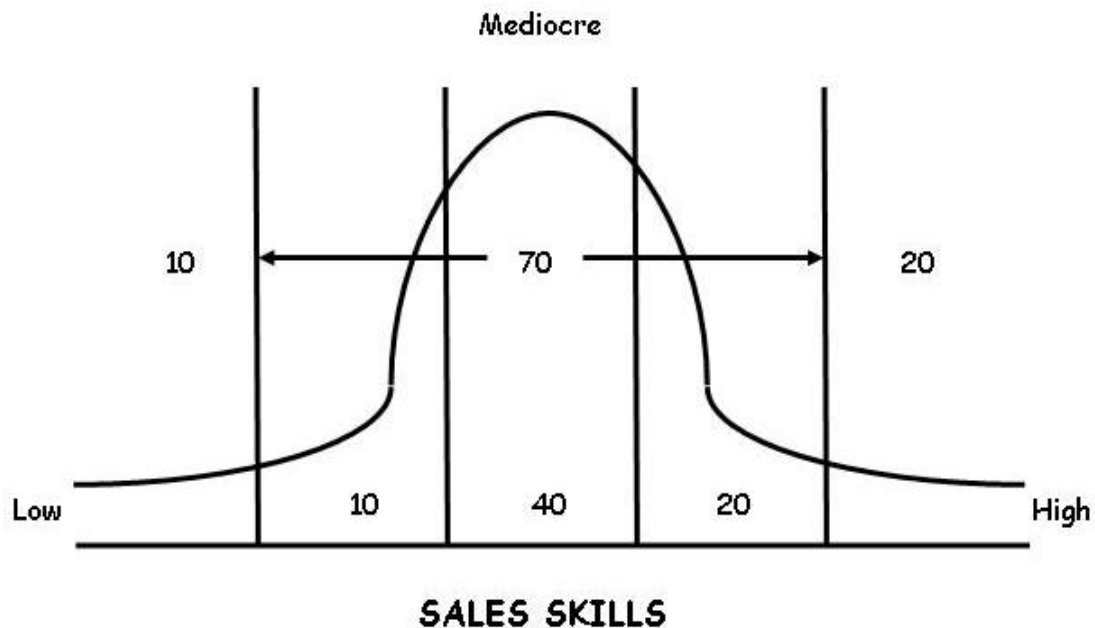
1. Control of individuals and their sales projects,
2. Timing and predictability of these sales projects,
3. Optimal use of labour and therefore lowering cost-of-sales,
4. Huge productivity gains through less wheel-spinning from scarce technical resources,
5. Discerning engagement decisions drives higher hit-rates,

A key success factor in implementation is the effort put in by the supervisor and front-line sales managers on the sales opportunity. A process by definition is well defined and therefore can be *delivered in a repetitive nature*. Tools and outcomes used within the process drive certainty with the individual salespeople who *understand what is expected of them*. Success using the process by closing deals, *supports continued use and exploitation*. Being defined, allows managers to *evaluate the process dispassionately* thereby ensuring that published pipelines close when they should. Feedback to the salesperson creates an environment where *continued learning and process improvement* can take place. In short; limit dependence on the black art of selling and enhance your practitioners' delivery through the application of a defined, manageable process.

## *Distribution of skills*

All teams have some distribution of skills. Few teams make 100%+ of their target year on year. By definition people are different and you can see that in following salespeople to their calls. There is no one way to be successful. If there was, it would have been

defined, patented and sold in little bottles! In the following Figure 1, we show how a sales team could be defined and distributed in the natural bell curve.



**Figure 1 - Distribution of SKILLS**

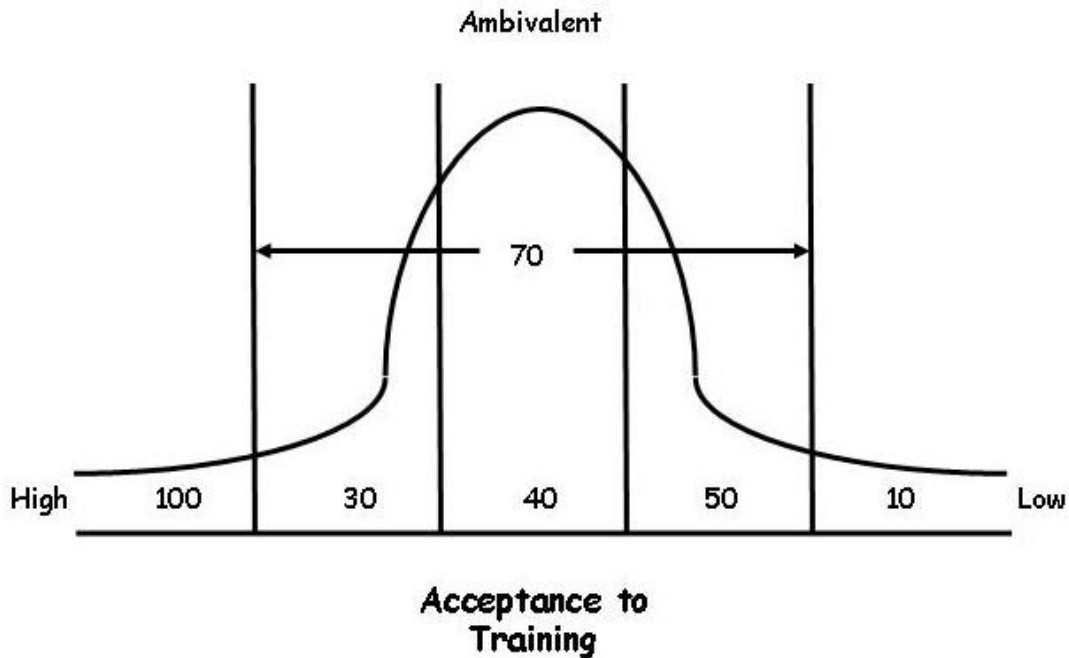
Studies have shown, that 70% of your team falls within the majority while 10% and 20% constitute the under and over performers. Within the majority, there is a similar distribution where 40% make up the centre ground and of the "rest", 10% could slide into obscurity while 20% have a chance of making the leap into the *consistently* good performers.

Given that you accept that there is some kind of distribution in your team, making a training decision must take into account that the individuals are different and that a "blanket" intervention may not deliver the desired effects.

### ***Acceptance by the team of a training intervention***

In Figure 2 we define the team again, using the natural distribution of a bell curve. Given that you may select a "generic" sales training initiative, it is valid to assume that some of your people will benefit more than others. We have got to qualify here, that we are talking about sales teams that are populated by salespeople that have been hired with some skills. They "believe" they are salespeople and have some kind of track record. These arguments are not aimed at greenhorns who have never sold before.

Given these criteria, the team members have different emotions in accepting the management decision (normally forced on the "underperforming" team) to undertake a training intervention.



**Figure 2 - Acceptance to training**

Those with low skills will welcome the opportunity to learn their chosen profession. Those who have been around the block - have "been there and got the T shirt" normally have a low acceptance - they can even become disruptive of the process and may become a reason why training fails. The majority - ambivalent! Should training be effective in the team, the distribution shown in Figure 2 comes from a study to determine by what percentage we could expect to *increase* the sales effectiveness of the individuals falling within these sectors. Underperformers require a special decision making. If they have the potential, then a doubling of their performance is quite within probability (100%). Alternatively, as conventional management wisdom ascribes to Jack Welch - remove them and replace them with individuals that can deliver - even in 6 months - the yearly performance you're expecting to get from this sector. "Conventional wisdom" dictates that managers concentrate on the top performers (10%) and apply their support and mentoring here. These people are also mostly the noisy "squeaky wheel" and demand support. This segment is normally where managers come from - having been rewarded with promotion through high consistent performance. He/she relates to this segment!

However, the greatest return on investment for managers' time is to concentrate on the majority and within that group those that can become over performers.

Given that these observations make sense and that they can be discerned in your team to a greater or lesser extent, how do we go about placing the emphasis on the correct segment while training everyone in the team to lift their performance?

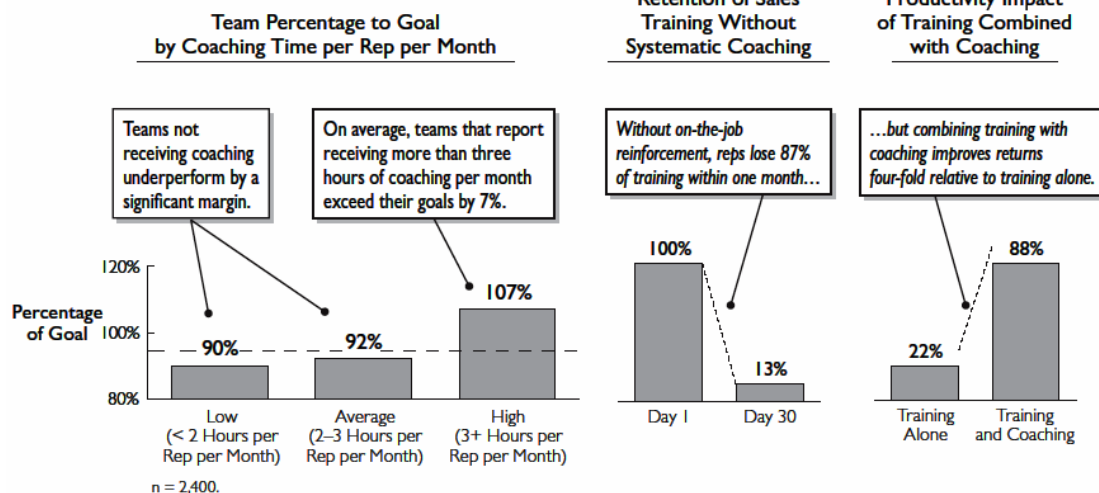
### ***Tradition Sales Training***

Most lecture and plenary (tell, show and let try) training will cover all members of the team and have different results depending on where they are in their sales character evolution. We argue that it is the duty of the sales manager/supervisor, to be so close to each individual that their specific needs can be determined. Once identified, the enterprise should design a specific intervention for that individual which delivers a focused training on their **SKILLS** shortcomings. Thus, letter writing, or presentation skills or any of the "soft skills" should be trained at the individual level. We further argue, that for the team to perform two distinct things have to occur;

**ONE.** The sales manager *must spend time with each individual coaching* them to perform to their best ability. Coaching is not remedial. It is not aimed at fixing broken salespeople.

**While coaching is both the manager activity most closely associated with rep success...**

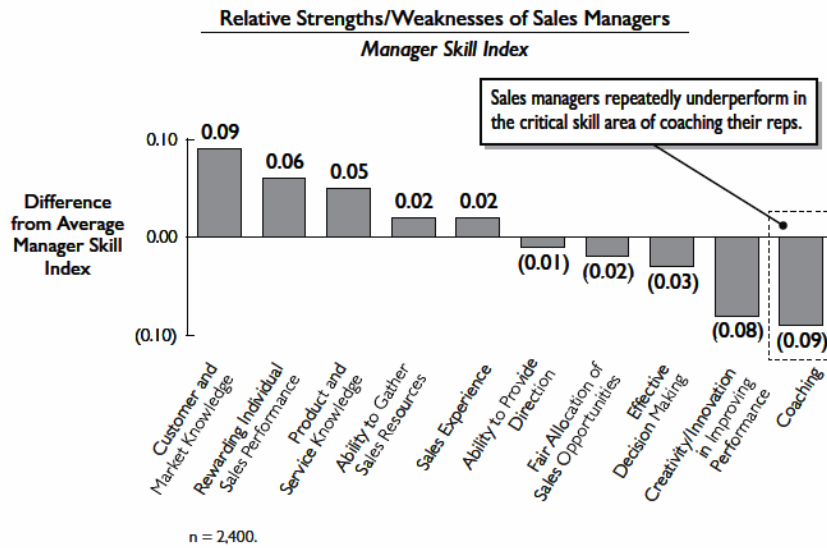
**...and the key to maximizing value of training efforts...**



It is aimed at getting the individual to identify areas of their approach that are less than optimal. To get them to realise through their own effort that these areas will improve their performance, and finally, to get them to internalise change through a

realisation that they want to succeed. Many studies have shown that teams that have received this time from their managers have shown phenomenal improvements in performance.

**...it is, regrettably, also the activity that managers perform least well**



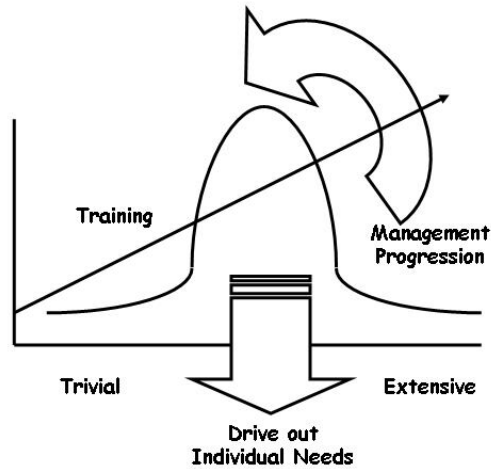
Coupled with a renewed will to work, the 9-5 syndrome is reduced and individuals have a heightened sense of purpose, personal worth and belonging. Unfortunately, as shown in Figure 3, the sales manager comes from this segment of the over-performers. We have observed that *they spend their time trying to "close" their teams' opportunities* through the application of their own presence and skill. They run themselves ragged and never have any time for strategic thinking or "quality" time. It is observed then, that if a training blanket is thrown over the team which consists of either trivial training of a basic level, or advanced training, the chances that the team will benefit is moot.

# Traditional Sales training



**Sales Competencies & Assessment criteria**

- **Preparing:** Initial discussions. Set objectives for the meeting. Before contact has all the relevant information.
- **Positioning:** Establishes a purpose, knows the clients agenda, knows how to add value, speaks in the customers language "C level" of Industry talk
- **Discovery:** Listens attentively and effectively, asks open-ended questions, understands client's business needs
- **Building:** Engages client in discussion, explores the impact and consequences of a need/solution on the enterprise and the individual.
- **Presenting:** Discusses alternatives and attempts to get the client to define solution scenarios that are prioritised
- **Securing:** Seeks commitment to action and defines next steps clearly using Joint Action Plan (JAP)
- **Concluding:** Reaches consensus, agrees time scale and deliverables from both parties, agrees to a review of the JAP
- **Debriefing:** Confirms that delivery has been met, uses the opportunity to build credibility, seeks internal and external references, seeks new opportunities, records or solicits output for references



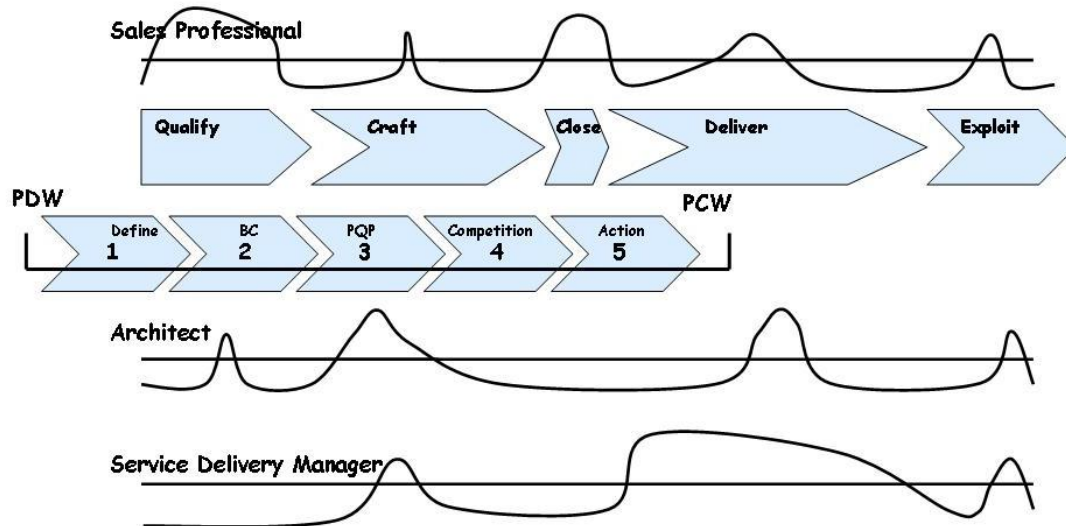
**Figure 3 - Blanket coverage?**

**TWO.** A training intervention which would benefit *ALL* members of the team equally must be sought. We argue that such an offering must produce a common language and method of operation. In short *an Ideal Sales Process*. Such a process defines the things we do *"in this team"* that is necessary for us to be successful with our products in our chosen customers and market. Such a process, once defined, can be observed dispassionately by anyone. *Any level* of salesperson can implement such a methodology. Salespeople should use the process *to manage themselves* and their resources in a sales opportunity. Sales Managers must measure the adherence to the process. Ideally, all members of the sales team should have KPI's attached to their performance in implementing the process

## ***The sales process***

All activities have a beginning and an end. The sales process should also be structured like a "project". As can be seen in Figure 4 below, a Project Definition Workshop (PDW) through the 5 stages of running a sales opportunity (based on Winning Complex Sales - WCS) and lastly, a Project Close Workshop (PCW) where the customer signs off that we have concluded the project successfully. The sales professional has to Find, Qualify and

Close opportunities. When we define this as a process, the individual knows what to do next - can see for them selves that the "work" is not completed and managers can micro-manage the activity.



**Figure 4 - Common language for success**

Support management can make discerning decisions on implementing their scarce resources to sales projects that have been correctly and repeatedly "qualified" to a *Project Qualification Profile* (PQP) standard. The common language of the project is used by the project leader (the salesperson mostly) to align virtual resources behind their vision for the project. This dives the most important feature of this training. The unlocking of a *team based energy* enabled through a common vision and alignment.

## **Conclusion**

We have found that implementing an Ideal Sales Process which is relevant for your team and your market has huge benefits for the team. A pleasant outcome is that all salespeople accept the process as being beneficial to their own management of their "Company of One". High flyers are not at their peak of performance without having sensitivity to what will work in their sales life. They become the most eager and fully committed to implementation! This alone is a significant benefit for choosing a sales process methodology. Acceptance by the opinion makers in the team means that they become the touchstone and example to all the team - helping management to drive compliance and ROI!