



# train reaction

## HOW TO MEASURE THE RESULTS OF YOUR TRAINING EFFORTS

BY JEANINE GAJEWSKI

**W**hat if you invest a hefty sum training your sales force, only to have top performers leave you for other opportunities? Conventional business wisdom answers, "What if you don't train them and they stay?" But if training is such a vital investment, why are so many CEOs unhappy with the results?

"I would say that 80 percent to 90 percent of people who invest in sales training are disappointed with the results for a variety of reasons," says Jason Pappas, CEO of EntreQuest.

By entering the sales training process with realistic expectations, firm goals and a willingness to go the distance, CEOs can get the most out of their investment and reap the benefits of a well-trained team.

### REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

While training can go a long way toward improving your people, it can't make up for poor hiring.

"The CEO has to understand they have to hire the things they can't change and train the things they can," says Ken Wolff, a partner with Achievement LLC. "If you start with the right natural DNA, then training can have substantial impact. You can't hire people because they have relationships, a Rolodex and technical competence and feel that applying sales training to them is going to turn them into sales

superstars. Statistically speaking, that works about 8 percent of the time.

"For example, if you had given Tiger Woods no training and given me all the training in the world, there is still a good chance he would be better than me," Wolff says.

### THE QUICK FIX

Once you engage a training program, be prepared to commit for the long haul. Often companies looking for a quick fix for an ailing sales team will send staff to a one-day sales seminar. While that might give the team a shot of adrenaline, ultimately the team might have trouble sustaining a higher level of performance.

"You don't change habits in a few hours," Pappas says.

"We find that if a company doesn't adopt a system or process completely, then training doesn't have much value," says Matthew Neuberger, CEO of Neuberger and Company, Inc. "Managers can't hold that person accountable to it, and therefore, there is no incremental growth and the sales person ultimately fails. Training is a process of reinforcement."

### TRAINING METRICS

The key to enforcing accountability is to outline goals and objectives in advance of the training program and then check up on the progress.

"I think that a lot of companies make decisions about training based on budget-

### Training Q&A: Matt Bensen, CEO, Monarch Mortgage



**Q:** What factors led to your decision to implement a training program?

**A:** The mortgage industry is shrinking right now but the competitors are shrinking faster. That means we have to be better than our remaining competitors and then we can actually grow.

**Q:** What results have you seen?

**A:** Quantifying is tough because there are so many factors involved. We are hiring smarter now and structuring our training around accountability to performance in the pipeline and tracking everything in a war room in our offices. In our shrinking industry, we are in fact growing now. The future looks bright for us.

**Q:** What advice would you give other CEOs who are looking to revamp their employee training?

**A:** You can't learn to do things in a classroom alone. Implementation and accountability are the keys to making a training investment work. Concentrate on providing training resources where it will do the most good, not to bring up the poor performers.

### Training Q&A: Michael Cowell, CEO, GeoStructures



**Q:** Why did you decide to require that your engineers receive sales training?

**A:** I had had a lot of sales training as I came up as an engineer because I was selling engineered products. It was very valuable for me to be able to listen to my clients and understand their needs. You can call it selling, but it's really communication and being able to listen to someone who has a need, whether they express it in a gracious manner or a demanding matter.

**Q:** How has your non-sales staff reacted to the sales training?

**A:** The reaction is mixed. We have some people who say it is great. Others ask, "Why am I here?" At the end of the day, some do very well and excel at it, others make their way through it. But just because they have a label on them as an engineer doesn't mean they can't do it.

**Q:** What results have you seen?

**A:** We have been growing at a rate of 30 percent to 50 percent a year. One could say it is a coincidence or a result of the training. I say it's helped us.