

ACCELERATING REVENUE THROUGH LEARNING:

DEVELOPING SALES
TEAMS THAT WIN



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TEAMS THAT WIN



ES RESEARCH GROUP

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| CONTENTS |

2	A NOTE FROM OUR SPONSOR
3	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
5	INTRODUCTION
7	SECTION I: LEARNING FOR SALES PROFESSIONALS
13	SECTION II: SUCCESSFUL SELLING
19	SECTION III: SALES PROFESSIONALS
21	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
23	REFERENCES
24	ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS
25	APPENDIX: ACCELERATING REVENUE THROUGH LEARNING OVERVIEW



| A NOTE FROM OUR SPONSOR |

ES RESEARCH GROUP

Making the right decision



ES Research Group is a research and advisory services firm based in Massachusetts. Our mission is to maximize the value of the relationship between the sales training buyer and the internal or external sales training provider through our knowledge base, experience, and guidance in making the right decisions about sales training.

Recommendations are our key deliverable, separating us from myriad other pure research companies.

Recommendations are our key deliverable, separating us from myriad other pure research companies. Our objective is not merely to report back summarized data, but to have our sales experts draw actionable conclusions from the data.

For this study, ES Research collaborated with the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) to develop the survey questions. ASTD then administered the survey to its membership. The research team carefully analyzed the results, and evaluated them in the findings with other research in mind.

The past few years have been very difficult for sales across the board, due to the stagnant economy. Individual sales representatives have found it difficult, if not impossible, to meet sales quotas. Organizations worldwide have been underperforming. However, amid this recession, there have been both salespeople and

sales organizations in general that have met or exceeded their objectives. This, of course, is partially due to their product and/or service mix. However, regardless of product or service line, there seemed to be certain sales force behaviors that separated the leaders from the laggards.

Successful sales organizations, first of all, continue to invest in sales training whereas low performing organizations decrease or eliminate sales training expense entirely. However, this does not seem to be the only sales training factor to affect performance. Many, possibly most, successful sales organizations have also shifted sales training strategy and tactics to develop specific sales skills necessary for selling in difficult economic times. We will examine these strategies and tactics as part of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ASTD's *Accelerating Revenue Through Learning: Developing Sales Teams that Win* report (hereafter referred to as the Study) is a follow-up of ASTD's previously published *State of Sales Training* report. The Survey reveals that the sales organization in most companies is underperforming, as also reported by CSO Insights and other reputable research organizations, including Training Industry, Inc. and Hewitt Associates. The consensus among researchers is that half of business-to-business (B2B) sales representatives don't achieve their quota. Some will blame this on the economic downturn that began in the fourth quarter of 2008. However, looking back, we can easily see that sales effectiveness—ongoing, consistent sales performance against quotas—has been an elusive goal for many companies for a long time.

There are a host of reasons for this, including inconsistent application of process, unqualified sales and sales management personnel, lack of support from other departments (such as marketing), a misunderstanding of what professional selling really is on the part of senior management, and, yes, ineffective training and development, if it exists at all.

What's the problem? At the highest level, the facts show that salespeople, in general, are different from their counterparts in other departments within their companies. They think differently, and have different motivations (most often money or recognition). They behave differently, and have what many would consider a different type of job. Salespeople themselves, in responding to the survey, feel they are the face of their companies. They have a greater ability to influence customer perception, and to adapt their behavior and actions to different audiences more regularly. One point is certain: salespeople have different learning and development requirements from their colleagues in other departments.

As a result, there is a significant “disconnect” in many companies between the Sales and Learning functions. In some companies the sales function is, at best, the reluctant customer of learning. In others, Sales wants

nothing to do with Learning and seeks its own training partners and solutions. Seen from the salesperson's perspective, this is troubling. They often have the tools, methods, learning, and coaching available, but need to learn how to use them in an effective manner in order to be successful.

The most striking aspect of this Study is that only 44 percent of respondents attend any kind of formal sales education. More importantly, it means that 56 percent of salespeople received no formal sales training from their organization, and yet, 96 percent of the respondents think continuous learning is critical to their success. This is a serious training deficiency in an area critical to an organization's success.

There are other important and actionable implications from this Study:

- Nearly half of the respondents feel that they get little or no support at being agile, creative, and flexible with their clients and prospects
- Fifty-eight percent said they believe better selling and influencing skills is of high importance to them
- Many respondents said they are uncomfortable with the role of the salesperson as defined by their company and their management
- Forty-four percent of the respondents indicated they learn by listening to digital content
- A majority of salespeople (61 percent) responded that they needed frameworks, approaches, and methodologies they can customize in order to effectively leverage the sales training they received
- Respondents recognized relationship building, problem-solving/diagnosis and listening as three critical skills.

Overall, the Study indicates that there is considerable need for improvement and it will come as a wake-up call for training and sales leaders alike. We are not effectively developing our sales talent, and the price we are paying from a sales effectiveness perspective is significant.

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ASTD's *Accelerating Revenue Through Learning: Developing Sales Teams that Win* report compliments the ASTD *State of Sales Training* report by examining questions and issues that are both strategic and tactical to the delivery of sales training. This Study strives to investigate three things: (1) How has the sales process evolved? (2) How does that evolutionary process affect the training requirements of salespeople? and (3) How do sales training functions within corporations respond to these changes?

Arguably, one of the key findings of the Study is that there is a distinct evolutionary trend in the sales process. The job of selling has demonstrably changed and evolved in identifiable stages over the last 30 to 40 years. As we start the next decade, we see significant changes in the profession of selling which must be addressed by sales training. While these changes in the sales profession are precipitated by the stagnant economy, the Study leads us to the conclusion, when comparing it to past data that the economy is an accelerator but that the technology available to buyers, buyer and seller behavior, and sophistication of the marketplace are the underlying,

root causes of the shift. Over the decades, the meantime between generations of sales process, and therefore the necessary sales training to acclimate people to that process has significantly declined. The sales process is evolving ever more rapidly.

The Study also recognizes the need for two different training requirements for sales professionals. The first requirement is the need to provide sales training on company products and services which are unique to, or of a commodity, uniquely positioned by the company. The second is the need to provide training on a competitive process or methodology for selling which includes both selling tasks and deliverables. This process or methodology is much like a computer program guiding the actions of the sales person. However, sales collateral, selling conversations, sales deliverables as well as sales policies and practices are unique to the company and its product and service mix.

With those general trends stated we now invite you to examine the questions, answers and conclusions presented in the Study.

A NOTE ABOUT THE DATA

Some of the tables and graphs included in this report contain data from correlations. Correlations measure the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. The closer a correlation is to +1, the stronger the positive relationship between the two variables. That means that an increase in one variable is associated with an increase in the other. Correlations in this report relate to the Market Performance Index (MPI), which is based on self-reported performance in the areas of revenue, market share, profitability, and customer satisfaction.

Correlations do not necessarily mean that a cause-and-effect relationship exists between the variables involved. Rather, when a correlation between the two variables is found to be significant, it signifies that the relationship isn't coincidental. For instance, with a correlation of $p < .05$, there is only a 5 percent chance that these results would have occurred by chance. In other words, you can be 95 percent confident that these results are not in error and that you would get these same results if you conducted this research again. With a correlation of $p < .01$, which represents the majority of correlations reported in this study, you can be 99 percent confident that these results are not in error.

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With the selling profession being in flux, more is being asked of sales professionals in terms of supporting their customers and prospective clients. Sales teams have to grow faster, adapt faster, respond faster, and perform better. In all of these, the challenge is for the sales team to learn. Learning is the next competitive advantage. As detailed in ASTD's *State of Sales Training* report, those who embrace learning have been found to improve their performance. But how are sales professionals learning and what training are organizations providing their sales teams?

Sales professionals indicated that their individual sales performance fit in a normal distribution curve. Forty-two percent of respondents were within 76 percent to 100 percent of their target quota. Additionally, 26 percent were within 101 percent and 125 percent of their target sales quota, while 7 percent within 126 percent and 200 percent or more of their quota. This is fairly representative of the distribution shape reported in the ASTD *State of Sales Training* report, although the challenging economy and increases in sales quotas appears to have skewed it slightly more to the lower end of the scale (negative skew). What is currently being done to help sales professionals increase their performance and achieve their sales quotas and more?

LEARNING STYLE

A striking finding from this study is that a majority of sales professionals learn through informal mechanisms; only 44 percent of respondents learn by attending a class. Most importantly this means that 56 percent of salespeople receive no formal sales training from their organization. In addition, Figure 1 shows that, 34 percent avail themselves of training by external sales training providers, while 28 percent learn from an internally coordinated training curriculum.

By contrast, most salespeople are highly motivated to learn new things, with 90 percent of respondents taking personal responsibility for learning on their own in order to stay ahead of the competition, their customers, and their peers. In addition, over three-quarters of the survey participants read books or articles in order to

learn. Not surprisingly, the Internet has become a major source of education and information, with 71 percent of respondents indicating that they learned by searching for information on the Internet. With most people having increased access to digital media devices such as the iPod and iPhone, the use of learning materials in a digital audio format is increasing. Forty-four percent of sales professionals reportedly learn by listening to digital content. It is likely that with the rise of technology-based and mobile learning, the reliance on these methods for educational learning will increase over the years.

There is a real dichotomy in the training methods salespeople are using to learn. Sales professionals are not only learning electronically through self-paced, technology-based learning methods, but they are also relying on individuals around them to aid in their learning process. Just over three-quarters of the respondents stayed ahead of the competition, their customers, and their peers by having discussions with their peers. Additionally, 72 percent learned by observing others, 49 percent while being coached by someone else (e.g. a sales manager or consultant), 47 percent by co-creating with customers, and 19 percent by working/meeting with a formal mentor.

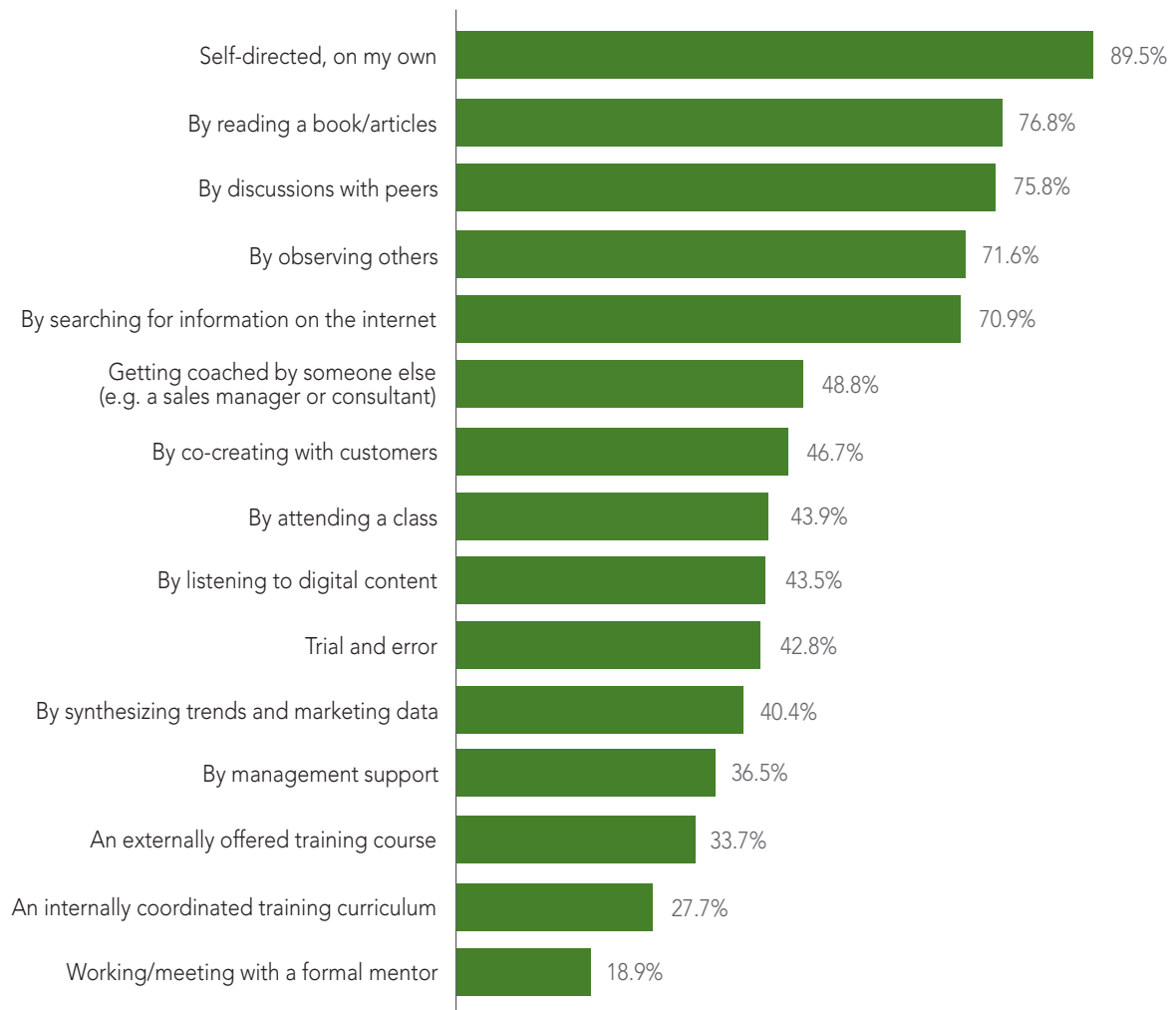
CURRENT TRAINING RESPONSIBILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

In response to the question of who has ultimate responsibility for their personal development and growth, more than three-quarters of the respondents claimed personal responsibility, while 20 percent claimed that it

was their manager's responsibility. The vast majority of salespeople took ultimate responsibility for their own personal development. However, there are multiple ways to interpret the question. It is true, that the salesperson has ultimate responsibility for his or her personal knowledge and growth. However, this begs the question of who has

FIGURE 1 | SELF-DIRECTED STUDYING WAS THE MOST COMMONLY USED LEARNING METHOD

How do you learn in order to stay ahead of the competition, your customers, and your peers?



organizational responsibility for providing sales training to sales professionals. In this scenario, the answer “I do” is equivalent to the answer no one.

Regarding the effectiveness of the sales training that is being provided by the organization (Figure 2), 69 percent of respondents consider the sales training they receive to be moderately or highly effective, while only 11 percent thought it was ineffective or slightly ineffective. But what is surprising is that nearly 70 percent of the sales professionals think the sales training they receive is effective, even though only 44 percent learn by attending a formal class.

The long-term effectiveness of sales training has been studied extensively in a variety of populations, by ES Research and Sales Performance International. Distinct stages of post-training effectiveness have been found. Without immediate reinforcement of the training, 50 percent of the knowledge conveyed in a training session is forgotten by the trainee at the end of the session. Without reinforcement, the observed effects of training declines

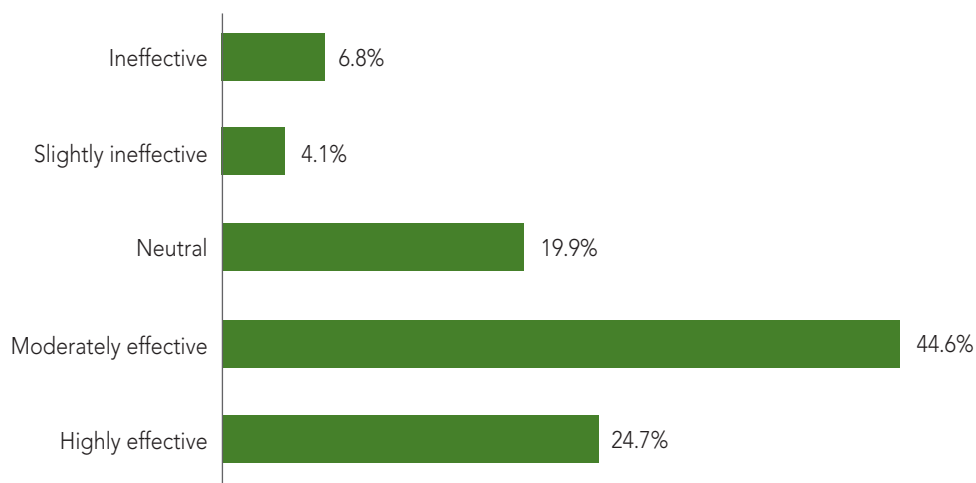
steadily over a period of 90 days. If reinforcement doesn't occur again within three months of training, sales professionals typically return to their pre-training behaviors.

The decline in training effectiveness over time can be masked by seasonal changes in revenue attainment. Typically, there is marginal revenue growth during the fourth fiscal quarter of a year, marked by a seasonal decline in revenue for the first fiscal quarter. Depending upon when the sales training is delivered, the decay of knowledge gained during sales training can be masked by seasonal changes in revenue.

There are proven techniques to improve sales person retention of sales training material. Testing is a meaningful way for instructors and managers to evaluate both student performance and the effectiveness of the training materials. However, testing is also proven to increase student retention of training material. The improvement in knowledge retention resulting from testing can be dramatic. Testing has the effect of migrating learned knowledge from short-term memory to long-term memory in

FIGURE 2 | MOST SALES TRAINING IS EFFECTIVE

I believe the sales training I receive is:



the student. The post-90 day retention of training material can be clearly observed. However, sales professionals and their sales managers often typically operate within a 90-day planning horizon and therefore fail to observe this effect.

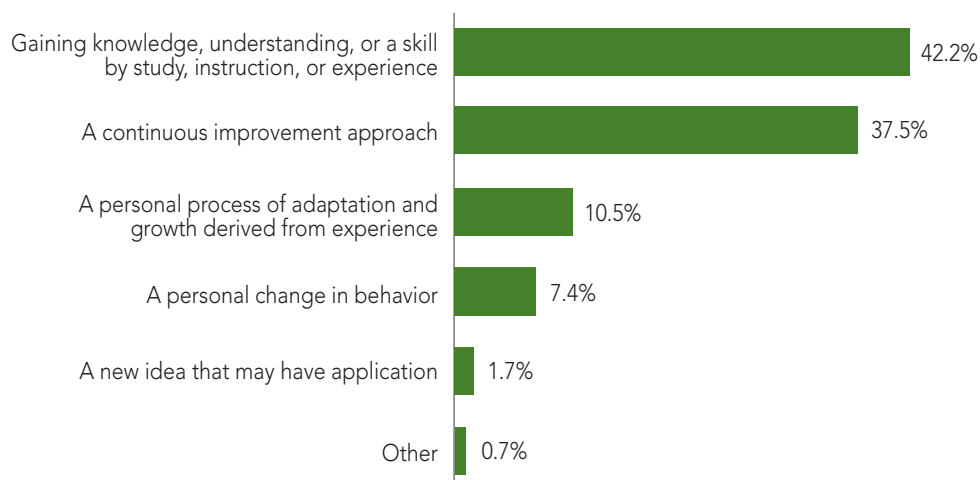
THE CONTINUOUS LEARNING PROCESS

To provide sales professionals with the learning and development programs they expect, sales trainers must understand sales professionals' perception of learning. Nearly half of the respondents defined learning as "gaining knowledge, understanding, or a skill by study, instruction, or experience" while less than 40 percent characterize learning as a "continuous improvement approach." (Figure 3) Clearly, sales professionals see learning as a constant evolving process, rather than stagnant. The notion of constantly adapting behaviors in order to consistently succeed was supported by 84 percent of respondents, who either agreed or strongly agreed with the concept. Additionally, sales professionals strongly agreed that "continuous learning is critical to my personal and financial success;" only 4 percent of respondents disagreed.

In addition to this survey, ES Research's ongoing work with clients in the down economy reveals that one of the primary sales responses to price pressure from clients and customers is discounting. This is the typical response of an unprepared sales organization -- organizations that are not systemically agile or creative with their customers. Creative and agile organizations, on the other hand, have implemented programs that include education as well as corporate resources to those that respond to the pressure to discount with alternatives that include analysis of the competitor's price, product and functionality as compared to its own offerings (ES Research). This often results in showing the client that he or she received additional and critical functionality (which, in the best selling situations is converted to quantified business value by the salesperson) at the same, or an increased price. In short, the organization, not just the individual, must constantly adapt its behavior so that its salespeople can succeed.

The days of the formulaic approach to sales are behind us. Situations change so rapidly in today's marketplace, that learning must be a continuous process. There is a systemic

FIGURE 3 | LEARNING IS GAINING KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING, OR A SKILL
I define learning as:



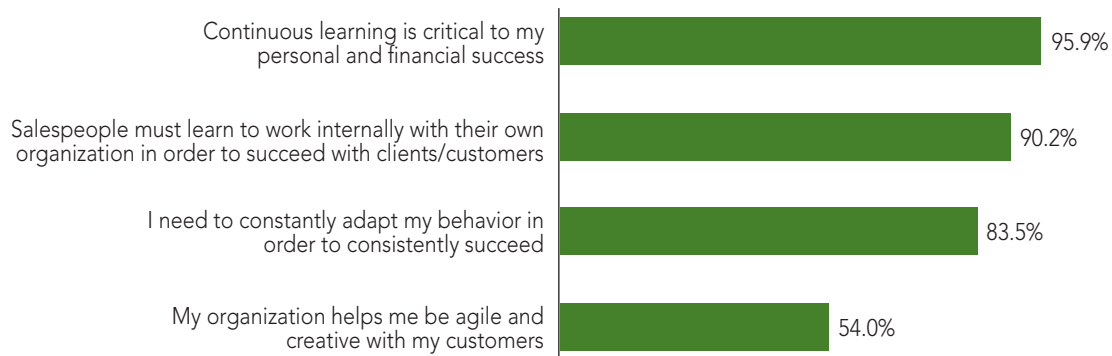
need for structural change in today's selling organization to respond to a permanent change in the market which has merely been exacerbated by the current economic conditions. The changes are here sooner, and are more noticeable because of the economic decline -- but these changes argue for structural changes in the marketplace, and only illuminated by, not caused by, the economic decline.

In order for sales learning and development to occur in a continuous manner, it cannot solely occur in a formal manner. As seen in Figure 4, 90 percent of those surveyed agreed with the premise that "salespeople must learn to work internally with their own organization in order to succeed with clients/customers." This idea emphasizes that learning is no longer something that happens on a quarterly or semi-annual basis, where knowledge is delivered from the corporation to the sales team. More than ever, learning must be a two-way street, where there can be checkpoint events, such as training classes, and mechanisms that allow the constant exchange of ideas to be socialized within the organization. This exchange of ideas can and should be considered informal learning.

When respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with the following statement "my organization helps me be agile and creative with my customers," 54 percent either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 30 percent neither agreed nor disagreed, and 17 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This question yielded an interesting insight into the average organization. It is a general condemnation of corporate America when nearly half of the survey respondents feel that they get little or no support at being agile, creative, and flexible with their clients and prospects. This is increasingly true in challenging economic times, when sales staff must be extremely attentive to customers, clients and prospects to rise above the noise level in the marketplace. Organizations that helped their sales professionals become more agile and creative with their customers saw the benefit as their Market Performance Index (MPI) scores were higher. It stands to reason that when organizations encourage agility and creativity with customers, they perform better on the market indicator questions, presumably because they are able to serve their customers better.

FIGURE 4 | CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND ADAPTATION IS CRITICAL TO MOST ISD PROFESSIONALS' SUCCESS

Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements:
Percent of respondents answering "agree" or "strongly agree"



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| SECTION II |

SUCCESSFUL SELLING

In order to be successful in selling, especially during an economically challenging time, sales professionals need to learn a variety of new skills and competencies, processes, tools, etc. Individuals not only need to embrace a learning mindset, but the organization must support and respond to this call as well.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Sales professionals take ultimate responsibility and accountability for their professional development and growth. More than three-quarters acknowledge that the responsibility of professional sales development, and therefore their success in selling, is dependent upon themselves. Seventeen percent hold their manager accountable,

while the learning department was only responsible for 3 percent. This emphasis on personal responsibility is also reflected in sales professionals' needs in order to become more successful in selling their products and services to clients and prospects. However, they acknowledge that this can't occur in isolation as they need support and relationships with others, as well as more opportunities to develop skills, in order to become successful.

"A personal approach to continuous improvement" was clearly of the highest importance to the responding sales professionals, with 60 percent indicating that they needed this to a high or very high extent to be more successful in selling. Figure 5 shows this was followed by 58 percent

FIGURE 5 | A PERSONAL APPROACH TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT, AND BETTER SELLING AND INFLUENCING SKILLS WILL LEAD TO MORE SUCCESSFUL SELLING

To be more successful in selling my products or services to clients and prospects, I need:
Percent of respondents answering "high extent" or "very high extent"



who called for skill improvements with better selling and influencing skills. Both of these responses emphasize that sales professionals take a lot of personal responsibility for their success in selling and attribute it to themselves, rather than the organization or any other external factors. However, the survey respondents acknowledge that they are not able to sell successfully without support from those around them. Sales professionals need more collaboration and support (55 percent), and better relationships with their internal and external networks (51 percent). Additionally, salespeople desire a competitive analysis (53 percent), which can provide them with specific strategies and tactics for outselling their competition.

External factors such as better pay, better technology, and a more clearly defined role were less important to sales professionals' success in selling products and services to clients and prospects. The need for better technology (35 percent) was lower than anticipated which could be due to salespeople feeling inundated with sales software and applications. Technological advancements have been moving at such a rapid pace, with vast amounts being released for the sales workforce, that sales professionals may feel that technology has helped them a great deal in recent years, and in order to become more successful in selling other factors need emphasis.

In addition, better pay and better technology, both of which require investments by the company, were ranked of relatively low importance. This could indicate that sales professionals are, more than ever, cognizant of the challenging economic times and ready to accept some personal responsibility for the success of the employer to a much higher degree than previously observed in better economic conditions.

TRAINING FOCUS

From ES Research's perspective, there has been a constant and steady shift in the role of the salesperson over the last 30 years from an information provider and order taker to a business consultant. This evolution of the sales role has gone through five distinct stages:

1. **Salesperson as social contact, information provider and order taker.** The original role of the salesperson

was to provide product or service information to the customer. Originally, this had a very high social interaction requirement which included lunches, dinners and golf games. The salesperson was a social contact for the customer.

2. **Salesperson as information provider and order taker.** As the economy and tax laws changed, the social role of salesperson as entertainer significantly diminished. Sales became more competitive and less personal. The salesperson became key product information provider and order taker.
3. **Salesperson as a consultant.** The evolution of the Internet in the 1990s virtually eliminated the role of the salesperson as an information provider. Rare was the first call to a client which consisted of introducing one's self, product or service and company. Most client interactions consisted of explaining information which the client had already received online and taking orders.
4. **Salesperson as discount provider.** The economic downturn which began in 2008 dramatically shifted the role of the salesperson. Clients and customers use the opportunity to squeeze as much of a discount as possible from vendors. Salespeople, in general, were unprepared for the shift in the economy. The result was clients requesting discounts and salespeople blindly passing those requests along to managers. Unfortunately, the net effect of many of these deals was that it worsened the economy.
5. **Salesperson as business consultant.** This is the current state of sales evolution. The salesperson needs to understand the economics of his or her own products and services as well as the economics of competitive products and services. The salesperson must be able to explain his or her product's advantages in terms of net savings and cost reduction. This is a major shift in the salesperson's skill set. Most salespeople have a little, if any financial training.

This evolution is evident from the survey respondents who understand that in today's economy, they need to act as a consultant to the client. In order to become a trusted business advisor for clients and prospects, 78 percent of sales professionals want their sales training to focus on how to manage the customer's perception of value, to a

high or very high extent (as seen in Figure 6). Additionally, respondents indicated that thinking more strategically (71 percent) was a skill that they needed to develop, as well as being a better consultant (71 percent). The focus of these top three topics all directly support the idea of salespeople acting as a consultant to the client, where they have to think strategically and demonstrate the value of their product or service to suit the specific needs of the client or prospect.

Salespeople recognize the need for additional skills, which will all aid them in being better consultants to their clients and prospects. Learning how to define and position solutions was identified, by 67 percent of the respondents, as a topic that sales training should focus on

to a high or very high extent, while creating and closing opportunities was identified by 63 percent.

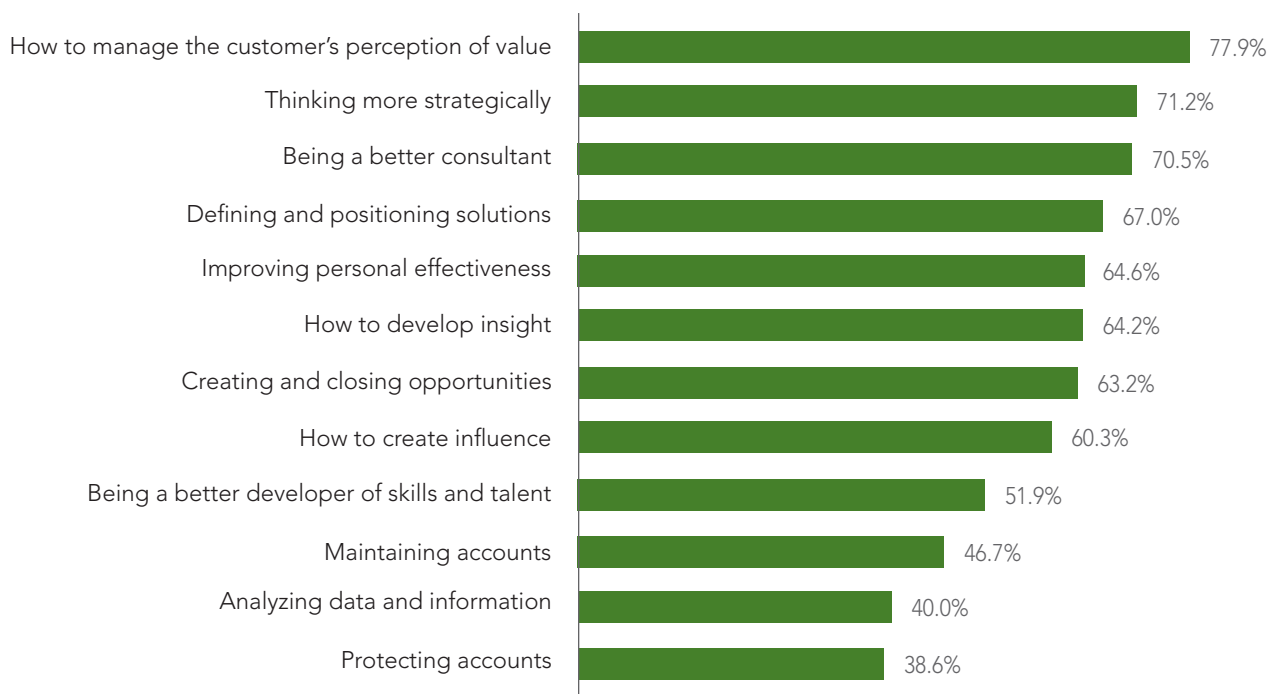
KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Respondents clearly feel that knowledge and skills are essential to their relationships with their clients and prospects. When asked what knowledge is needed in order to co-create or communicate value in relationships and conversations with clients and prospects, at least 50 percent of the sales professionals thought all the key content areas were needed to a high or very high extent: industry knowledge, product knowledge, selling skills, company-specific knowledge, and sales management skills (Figure 7). Selling skills were considered to be the

FIGURE 6 | BEING A STRATEGIC-THINKING CONSULTANT AND MANAGING THE CUSTOMER'S PERCEPTION OF VALUE WILL LEAD TO BECOMING A TRUSTED BUSINESS ADVISOR

For me to become a trusted business advisor with my clients and prospects, the sales training I receive should be focused on:

Percent of respondents answering "high extent" or "very high extent"



most important. Exactly three-quarters of the respondents needed selling skills to a high or very high extent, reinforcing the sentiment mentioned earlier, that better selling and influencing skills were needed to sell more successfully. Industry and product knowledge were also considered important, with 66 percent and 63 percent respectively.

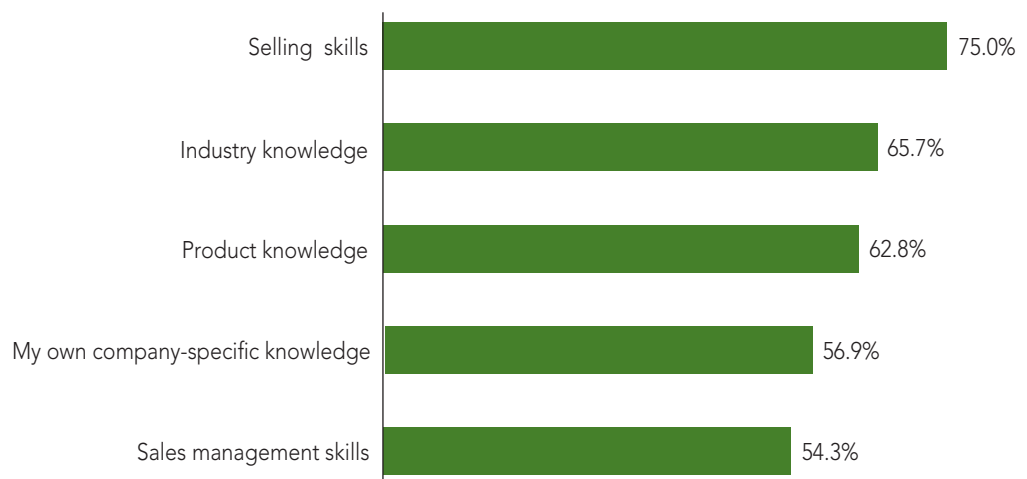
Additionally, salespeople were asked to select their top three most important skills and competencies that are crucial to becoming an effective and efficient trusted business advisor (Figure 8). Listening is by far the most desired skill, with 61 percent of respondents indicating that it is crucial. Listening is a skill that not many sales professionals master, yet it is important for them to be able to actively listen and reflect on what the client or prospect is

saying. Being able to repeat what the client has told you, but in different words, is important in working towards a definition of the solution to their challenge. Problem-solving and diagnosis was considered the second most crucial skill, by 43 percent of sales professionals. This skill is critical as customers and clients have difficulty in defining their problem. Clients and prospects are usually only able to describe symptoms that are easily visible, yet there could be a variety of unidentified symptoms, and additionally, the symptoms could have multiple causes. It is therefore up to the salesperson to act as a consultant to decipher the root cause and provide the client with a suitable solution. In order to achieve this in an effective and efficient manner, sales professionals need appropriate problem-solving and diagnostic skills.

FIGURE 7 | TO CO-CREATE OR COMMUNICATE VALUE, THREE-QUARTERS OF ISD PROFESSIONALS NEED SELLING SKILLS

What do you need to know in order to co-create or communicate value in your relationships and conversations with clients and prospects?

Percent of respondents answering "high extent" or "very high extent"



More than four in 10 respondents indicated that relationship building was crucial to becoming an effective and efficient trusted business advisor, rounding out the top three skills and competencies. Building relationships is extremely important in developing trust between the client and salesperson, especially if the salesperson is acting as a trusted business advisor. Additionally, it reassures the client that the sales professional has their best interest at hand. The remaining skills and competencies ranked lower, with 25 percent or less of the respondents thinking they were important. Fourteen percent thought business savvy and financial knowledge was important

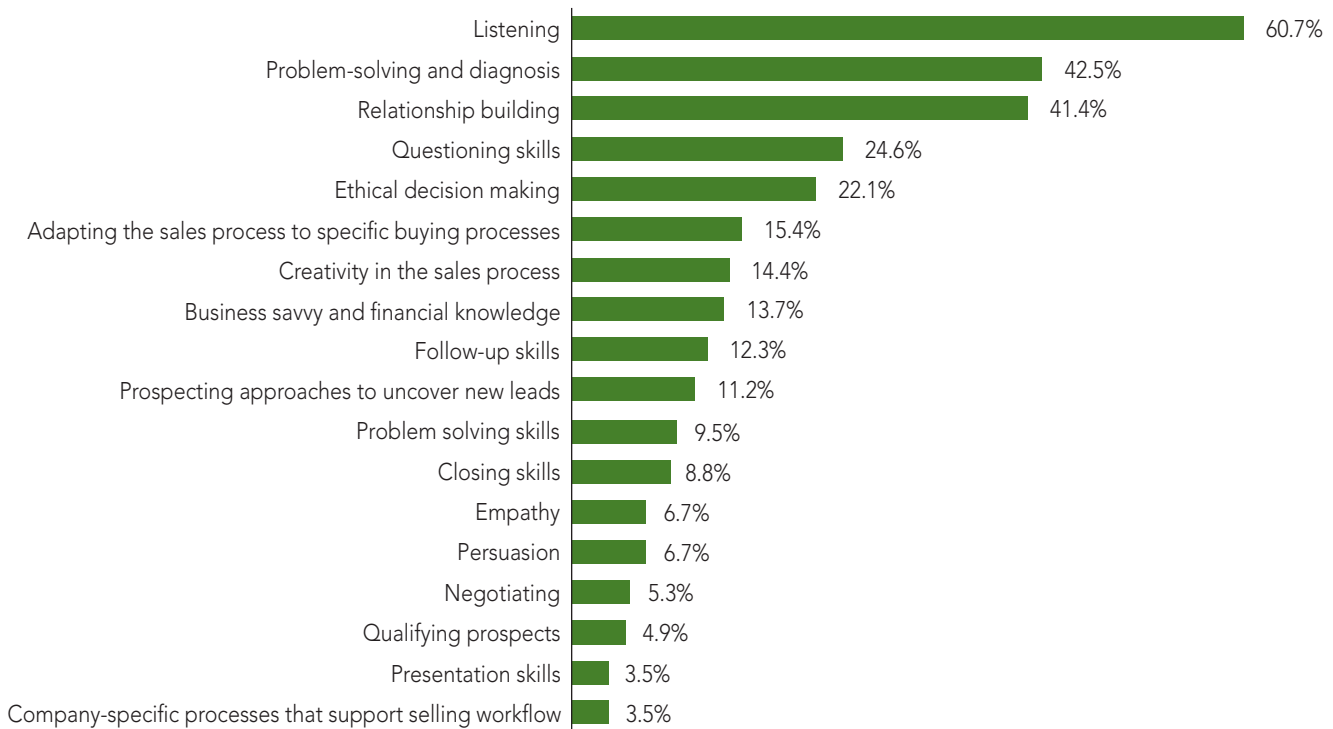
highlighting, the need for sales professionals to understand the changing dynamics of sales in a more volatile economy.

LEVERAGING TRAINING

In order to leverage the training sales professionals receive, a majority think they need frameworks, approaches, and methodologies they can customize (61 percent), as well as tools they can use in the field (55 percent)(Figure 9). This emphasizes that sales training cannot solely occur in the classroom, and in order to effectively leverage the training, sales professionals need to be able to adapt the

FIGURE 8 | LISTENING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILL TO BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT BUSINESS ADVISOR

Which skills and competencies are crucial to becoming an effective and efficient trusted business advisor? (Select the three most important)



knowledge they have acquired during training and apply it in different contexts within the field.

Reinforcement and practice of training material is essential for the transfer of training knowledge and behavior. However, traditionally, organizations have been reluctant to devote additional corporate resources to learning reinforcement. It required time and money, with which organizations were reluctant to part. An hour of reinforcement was an hour of not working, and an hour with no sales. Fortunately, today the reinforcement of training has become more cost-effective. The use of technology and the changing role of sales experts have modified the dynamic of learning reinforcement. The role of sales

experts has begun to shift from the conveyor of knowledge to the more important role of ensuring that the knowledge is reinforced and practiced. Forty percent of respondents indicated that qualification processes and activities with their manager would enable them to leverage their sales training. Sales professionals' managers are the sales expert and coach that should provide guidance on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, there is greater reliance on technology supporting learning reinforcement and aiding in leveraging the sales training received. Thirty-seven percent of the survey respondents wanted technology that supports the way they forecast deals to a high or very high extent in order to leverage the sales training they receive.

FIGURE 9 | FRAMEWORKS, APPROACHES, AND METHODOLOGIES ARE MOST NEEDED TO LEVERAGE SALES TRAINING

In order for me to effectively leverage the sales training I received, I need:
Percent of respondents answering "high extent" or "very high extent"



Individual factors also determine a sales professional's success in today's selling world. Their motivations and differentiators compared to others in the organization are important to evaluate when designing their sales training.

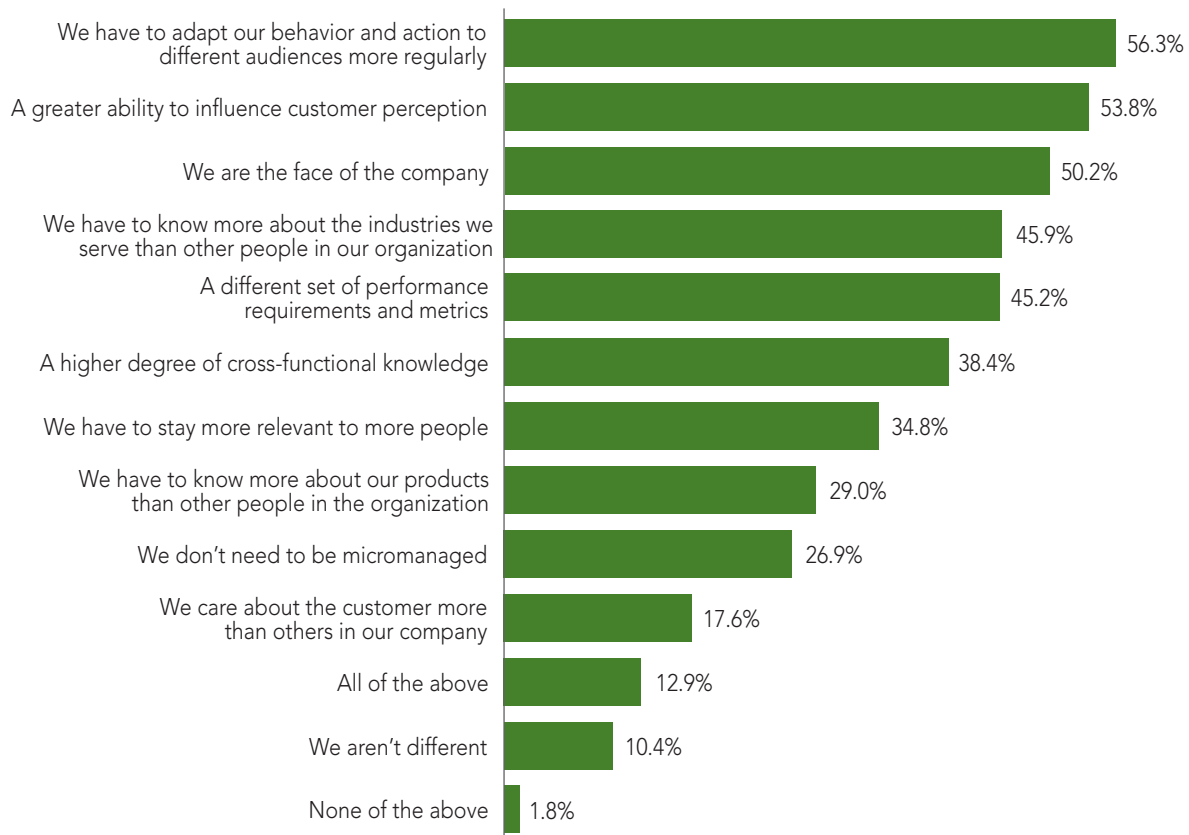
CUSTOMER-FACING

Besides revenue generation, what makes sales professionals different from others in their organization? When asked this question, more than half of the survey respondents indicated that salespeople were different because

they have to adapt their behavior and actions to different audiences more regularly (56 percent), they have a greater ability to influence customer perception (54 percent), and they are the face of the company (50 percent) (Figure 10). The fifty-six percent of respondents that indicated they adapt their behavior and actions to new audiences acknowledge the fact that not all customers or clients are the same, and they each have their own individual needs. This emphasizes the increasing responsibility of the salesperson to decipher and respond to a client or

FIGURE 10 | ADAPTABILITY AND INFLUENCE OF CUSTOMER PERCEPTION DIFFERENTIATE SALESPEOPLE FROM OTHER EMPLOYEES

Besides revenue generation, in what other ways are salespeople different from others in the company (check all that apply)?



prospect's requests, much like a consultant. Sales people also very much see themselves as the face of the company with a great amount of customer interaction. They therefore look for methods, procedures, and techniques for influencing customer perception. Customers' perception of the organization is largely formulated by their personal interaction with sales representatives; therefore sales professionals assume a lot of responsibility when interacting with clients. Additionally, 18 percent think sales professionals care about the customer more than others in the organization.

Other popular responses include salespeople having a different set of performance requirements and metrics (45 percent) and having to know more about the products than other people in the organization (29 percent). Thirteen percent indicated that sales professionals were different for all of the listed reasons, while, one in 10 sales professionals does not think they are different in any way

from employees in other departments and corporate functions. This has great implications in terms of the training sales professionals receive. If sales professionals don't think they are any different from others in the organization, then they do not need sales-specific training.

MOTIVATION TO ENTER THE SALES PROFESSION

On average, sales professionals have two occupations before entering the sales profession. A third of the respondents' first job was in the sales profession. Participants were asked to rank order the factors that motivated them to enter the sales profession in the first place. The primary reason was the potential for higher earnings, with an average ranking of 2.4 (34 percent of respondents selected it as their number 1 motivating factor). As seen in Figure 11, this was followed by a better fit with skills (an average ranking of 2.5 and 27 percent of respondents selected it as their number 1 motivating factor).

FIGURE 11 | POTENTIAL FOR HIGHER EARNINGS MOTIVATED SALES PROFESSIONALS TO ENTER THE PROFESSION

What motivated you to enter the sales profession in the first place? (put in order from 1-5)



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a clear dichotomy between a successful, over-achieving sales organization and an underperforming sales organization in this challenging economy. Part of the difference can be ascribed to products and services which are clearly related to cost reduction. However, it is also evident that the tendency among underperforming sales organization is to sell by discount, often to unprofitable levels. This report has shown us that success in this economy is based upon the ability to shift selling strategy. Furthermore, the key to shifting selling strategy is sales-force education. A new set of skills is clearly required, and, this set of skills is significantly different than those of the past.

Today, it is clear, that buyers are increasingly sophisticated. They are constantly demanding more product and service for the same, or even less cost. The unsophisticated sales representative responds by lowering the aggregate price rather than comparing the product and service functionality, defining monetary values for each function, and negotiating with the buyer on individual function prices rather than overall, aggregate product and service price.

It is indicated by this research that buyers will change their behavior in response to economic conditions faster than sellers. Sellers must therefore rapidly identify changes in buyer behavior and methodology and build sales training programs which respond to those changes and buyer behavior. It would appear that every economic downturn results in a permanent change in buyer behavior as we have seen over the past 40 years. There is no reason to believe that this economic situation will be any different. Foremost among our conclusions is that the shift in buyer/seller relationship is permanent. It is part of the natural sales methodology evolution.

It has also become apparent that the methods of delivering sales training are shifting. Except for the largest organizations which can afford to conduct their own sales research, the cost of constantly renewing knowledge delivered for sales training is prohibitive for the internal sales organization. While product or service specific training is clearly the province of the internal trainer, selling methodology or process requires a continual monitoring

of the selling environment which is beyond the resource capabilities of most companies. Sales training companies are in a far better position to identify these trends and strategies occurring at a variety of their client installations in a variety of industries.

In order to impact sales effectiveness through learning and reinforcement, the following recommendations should be strongly considered for implementation:

1. Take a strategic approach to sales training. Tactical, event-based training sessions do not often result in sustainable sales performance improvement, but unfortunately that is the approach that many companies take to training their salespeople. Among the biggest challenges the leading sales training companies face is convincing their customers that one- or two-day events as part of an annual sales kick-off meeting is not a sound investment of time and money. It is clear that in a challenging economy, a shift in salesperson tactics is required. Organizations that have adapted to the new style of selling precipitated by economic conditions, and have invested in sales training, are demonstrably more successful.
2. To the extent possible, be sure the salespeople who are being trained have the required traits for sales success. Among those are intelligence, positivity, resilience, self-motivation, persuasiveness, integrity, extroversion, and empathy. Training a salesperson to sell when they do not have these traits will not generally result in real improvement. Top-performing sales organizations employ profile-based hiring processes with structured, behavioral interviews.
3. Assess your company's training requirements comprehensively and objectively. The place to start is with the question, "How do our customers buy?" "Where are the gaps between how they buy and how we sell?" is the next question. The answer to that is the basis for a deep look into your company's sales methodology and whether it supports effective selling.
4. Build or rebuild your sales methodology and the constituent processes next. The most effective sales training occurs when salespeople learn to use

relevant and pragmatic sales processes, like how to qualify, execute a sales call, deliver a presentation, and negotiate a contract.

5. Be certain that the appropriate sales infrastructures are in place. That includes support from marketing, IT, and other functions as well as relevant compensation and incentive systems.
6. Build a plan to align the learning and sales functions on a single, common objective: increasing and sustaining higher levels of sales performance. Learning and development is a means to achieve this objective.
7. Be certain you understand how the salespeople in your company learn. As sales teams become more and more diverse, delivery approaches must be evaluated and adapted.
8. Build and maintain sales management processes and the training programs that will enable their use. Coaching, team-building, conflict resolution, hiring, and strategic planning are skills. A top-performing sales representative newly promoted into a sales management role may not have the skills to succeed.
9. Reinforcement is key for sustained learning and application. It must be a funded component of your strategic approach.
10. For many selling positions, salespeople need more business and financial acumen than they have. If this is the case in your company, be certain to include that in the sales training curriculum.
11. Consider engaging with a third-party sales training/methodology provider. They can provide significant value in the area of competitive selling, financial and industry acumen, consultative/solution selling, negotiation and presentation strategies, and messaging.
12. Build and maintain a sales performance measurement system. Sales leaders who only track lagging indicators, such as sales month-to-date, quarter-to-date, or year-to-date find that improving performance is difficult. Adherence to the newly learned behaviors (i.e. following the processes) through a measurement system will allow management to spot divergence from process early enough to correct before a sales opportunity is lost.

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| ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS |

The ES Research Group, Inc.

ES Research is a primary research company based in Massachusetts. Their mission is to maximize the value of the relationship between the sales training buyer and the sales training provider through their knowledge base, experience, and guidance in making the right decisions. ES Research develops new insights into the sales process. They carefully examine new products and services, companies primarily engaged in sales training and automation of various aspects of the sales lifecycle. In their attempts to validate sales training vendor claims, they interview thousands of sales training end users.

As a primary research firm, ES Research conducts original evaluations, surveys and discussions. All of their information is gathered first-hand by the ES Research team. Only on rare occasion do they cite the research of others, preferring to have their own, unbiased analysis and recommendations. For more information, visit www.esresearch.com.



The American Society for Training and Development

ASTD (American Society for Training & Development) is the world's largest professional association dedicated to the training and development field. In more than 100 countries, ASTD's members work in organizations of all sizes, in the private and public sectors, as independent consultants, and as suppliers. Members connect locally in 130 U.S. chapters and with 30 international partners.

ASTD started in 1943 and in recent years has widened the profession's focus to align learning and performance to organizational results, and is a sought-after voice on critical public policy issues. For more information, visit www.astd.org.



| APPENDIX |

ACCELERATING REVENUE THROUGH LEARNING OVERVIEW

Survey Process

Target Survey Population

The target survey population of the ASTD/ES Research *Accelerating Revenue Through Learning* survey consisted of an email list of sales professional contacts from ASTD that consisted of senior executives with sales responsibilities, sales managers, and sales people. In total, 322 usable responses were collected from the survey.

Survey Instrument

In this survey, multiple questions used the well-accepted 1–5 Likert-type scale, with a 1 rating generally designated as “not at all” and a 5 rating designated as a “very high extent.” There were 25 questions in all, including those geared toward the demographics of respondents.

Procedure

A link to an online survey was emailed to the target population, as well as being distributed on various sales-related websites and blogs, during May 2010.

Demographic/Company Profile Questions and Results

Q1: Do you consider yourself a?

Forty-four percent of respondents considered themselves to be a sales person. More than a quarter (28 percent) were senior executives with sales responsibilities, and finally 22 percent were sales managers (front line manager or supervisor with direct reports).

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A?

RESPONSES	PERCENT
Senior executive with responsibility for sales (Executive VP/Senior VP, Vice President, Director)	28.3%
Sales manager (front line manager or superior with direct reports)	21.7%
Sales person	44.4%
Other	5.6%

Note: This question also gave respondents the option of "sales trainer." At this point of the survey, if the respondent indicated that they were a sales trainer, they were directed to the end of the survey. The table above provides the percentages after the "sales trainer" selections were removed.

Q2: Please indicate which statement below best describes your role in your organization. (Choose one).

More than half of the respondents (51 percent) were quota-bearing sales professionals, while 15 percent were non-quota-bearing sales professionals. Additionally, 30 percent of respondents work in sales management.

PLEASE INDICATE WHICH STATEMENT BELOW BEST DESCRIBES YOUR ROLE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION. (CHOOSE ONE).

RESPONSES	PERCENT
I am a quota-bearing sales professional	50.6%
I am a non-quota-bearing sales professional	14.6%
I am in sales management	30.1%
Other	4.7%

Q3: Which type of solutions do you, as a sales team member, primarily sell?

Forty-two percent of respondents primarily sold service solutions, while 21 percent primarily sold product solutions. A sizable proportion (38 percent) sold an equal combination of both product and service solutions.

WHICH TYPE OF SOLUTIONS DO YOU, AS A SALES TEAM MEMBER, PRIMARILY SELL?

RESPONSES	PERCENT
Products	20.5%
Services	41.6%
An equal combination of both	37.9%

Q4: What is the primary nature of your sales efforts? (Choose one).

A significant majority of respondents (82 percent) primarily focus on business-to-business sales efforts. Sixteen percent do business-to-consumer sales, while 2 percent focus their efforts on business-to-government sales.

WHAT IS THE PRIMARY NATURE OF YOUR SALES EFFORTS? (CHOOSE ONE).

RESPONSES	PERCENT
Business-to-business	82.3%
Business-to-consumer	15.8%
Business-to-government	1.9%

Q5: Who has primary responsibility for the training/development of sales team members in your organization? (Choose one).

Approximately a third of participants reported sales executives are primarily responsible for the training/development of sales team members in organizations. This was followed by 19 percent of respondents who indicated that the CEO had primary responsibility followed by a learning executive (15 percent).

WHO HAS PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE TRAINING/DEVELOPMENT OF SALES TEAM MEMBERS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?
(CHOOSE ONE).

RESPONSES	PERCENT
CEO	19.0%
A sales executive	34.3%
A marketing executive	3.7%
An HR executive	5.3%
A learning executive	15.3%
An external sales performance consultant or coach	7.2%
Other	15.3%

Q6: Describe your organization’s type of operation.

More than half of the respondents (59 percent) describe their organization’s type of operations as national in scope (that is, having operations in one country only). Twenty-one percent say they work for global organizations (that is, having a high level of global integration), while 20 percent work in multinational organizations (that is, having national and regional operations that act independently).

DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION’S TYPE OF OPERATION.

RESPONSES	PERCENT
National	59.0%
Multinational	19.9%
Global	21.1%

Q7: Where is your organization headquartered?

A majority of respondents' organizations are headquartered in North America (79 percent). Twelve percent of the remaining respondents' organizations are headquartered in Europe.

WHERE IS YOUR ORGANIZATION HEADQUARTERED?

RESPONSES	PERCENT
North America	78.6%
Latin America	2.2%
Europe	11.5%
Middle East	1.2%
Africa	1.6%
Asia	2.5%
Oceania/Australia	2.5%

Q8: In what sector does your organization primarily operate?

Respondents represent a wide variety of industries. Hi-tech/telecom (21 percent), and Services (19 percent) were the sectors with most responses.

IN WHAT SECTOR DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION PRIMARILY OPERATE?

RESPONSES	PERCENT
Consumer goods	3.1%
Chemicals	0.9%
Education	6.5%
Energy/utilities	0.9%
Entertainment/hospitality	2.8%
Financial services/banking	8.1%
Food products	0.3%
Government	0.0%
Hi-tech/telecom	20.5%
Hospital/healthcare/insurance	4.0%
Manufacturing	7.1%
Mining or agriculture	1.6%
Nonprofit	0.6%
Pharma/biotech/medical device	3.1%
Retail	2.2%
Services	18.9%
Transportation	2.2%
Other	17.1%

Q9: What is the size of your organization’s total workforce?

Organizations of all sizes responded to the survey. A majority of 70 percent worked for organizations with 1 to 999 employees. Eighteen percent of respondents are employed by organizations with workforces of 1,000 or more. Twelve percent work in organizations with more than 10,000 employees.

WHAT IS THE SIZE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION’S TOTAL WORKFORCE?

RESPONSES	PERCENT
Under 100 employees	48.6%
100-499 employees	14.3%
500-999 employees	6.9%
1,000-3,499 employees	9.0%
3,500-4,999 employees	3.4%
5,000-9,999 employees	5.3%
10,000-24,999 employees	4.0%
25,000-49,999 employees	3.4%
50,000-99,999 employees	0.9%
100,000 or more employees	4.0%

Q10: What is your organization’s total revenue?

Participants reported a wide range of revenues for their organizations. Revenues under \$10 million were noted by 41 percent of respondents, while 15 percent of respondents noted revenues over \$1 billion.

WHAT IS YOUR ORGANIZATION’S TOTAL REVENUE?

RESPONSES	PERCENT
Less than \$10 million	41.3%
\$10 million to \$24.9 million	13.0%
\$25 million to \$49.9 million	7.1%
\$50 million to \$99.9 million	5.3%
\$100 million to \$249 million	9.0%
\$250 million to \$499 million	5.0%
\$500 million to \$999 million	4.7%
\$1 billion to \$2.99 billion	6.2%
\$3 billion to \$9.99 billion	3.4%
\$10 billion or more	5.0%

Performance Questions and Results

Q11: Please indicate your overall organizational performance.

The largest category of respondents characterized their organizations' performance in the areas of revenues, market share, profitability, and customer satisfaction as holding steady over the past five years. While customer service appears to be on the upswing, revenue, market share, and profitability are more representative of the difficult economic times. These four factors comprise the Market Performance Index, MPI, which is the basis for assigning a company a score based on market performance.

Note: The following four questions form the basis of the Market Performance Index, which is an average of the four questions from each respondent.

This question also gave respondents the option of “not applicable.” The table below provides the percentages after the “not applicable” selections were removed.

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR OVERALL ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE.

	AT AN ALL-TIME LOW LEVEL (1)	SIGNIFICANTLY WORSE (2)	ABOUT THE SAME (3)	SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER (4)	AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH (5)	AVERAGE
Revenue growth	5.3%	22.5%	36.5%	27.7%	8.1%	3.11
Market share	1.8%	12.2%	53.8%	27.2%	5.0%	3.22
Profitability	2.8%	18.5%	42.7%	30.4%	5.6%	3.17
Customer satisfaction	0.7%	7.7%	45.6%	37.3%	8.7%	3.46

Q12: In the past year, my overall individual sales performance was?

Forty-two percent of respondents' individual sales performance was between percent and 100 percent of their quota. A quarter of the survey participants achieved less than 75 percent of their quota. Additionally, a third of respondents' individual sales performance was above 101 percent of their sales quota.

IN THE PAST YEAR, MY OVERALL INDIVIDUAL SALES PERFORMANCE WAS?

RESPONSES	PERCENT
Less than 75% of quota	24.8%
76% to 100% of quota	42.2%
101% to 125% of quota	26.4%
126% to 150% of quota	3.6%
151% to 199% of quota	1.7%
200% of quota or more	1.3%

Learning and Improved Performance Questions

Q13: I define learning as: (Choose one)

“Gaining knowledge, understanding, or a skill by study, instruction, or experience” was the most commonly cited definition of learning, with 42 percent of the respondents agreeing with it. This was closely followed by “a continuous improvement approach,” with 38 percent of respondents selecting this definition.

I DEFINE LEARNING AS: (CHOOSE ONE)

RESPONSES	PERCENT
A personal change in behavior	7.4%
A new idea that may have application	1.7%
Gaining knowledge, understanding, or a skill by study, instruction, or experience	42.2%
A personal process of adaptation and growth derived from experience	10.5%
A continuous improvement approach	37.5%
Other	0.7%

Q14: I believe the sales training I receive is:

Overall, respondents believe the sales training they receive is effective. Forty-five percent thought it was moderately effective, while a quarter of respondents thought the sales training they received was highly effective. One in five had neutral feelings towards the effectiveness of the sales training, while 11 percent thought it was ineffective. There was also a statistically significant negative correlation with the MPI, indicating that the more effective a participant believed their sales training was, the higher their MPI score was.

I BELIEVE THE SALES TRAINING I RECEIVE IS:

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE (1)	MODERATELY EFFECTIVE (2)	NEUTRAL (3)	SLIGHTLY INEFFECTIVE (4)	INEFFECTIVE (5)
24.7%	44.6%	19.9%	4.1%	6.8%
AVERAGE: 2.24				
CORRELATION WITH MPI: -.12*				

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Q15: Who has ultimate responsibility and accountability for your professional development and growth?

An overwhelming majority of respondents (77 percent) report that they have ultimate responsibility for their professional development and growth. Seventeen percent lay the responsibility on their manager, while the remaining sample said it was their customers’, colleagues’, the learning/training departments’, or others’ responsibility.

WHO HAS ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH?

RESPONSES	PERCENT
My manager	16.6%
My customers	2.4%
My colleagues	0.3%
The learning/training department	3.0%
I do	77.0%
Other	0.7%

Q16: Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements.

A vast majority of respondents (84 percent) indicate that continuous learning is critical to their personal and financial success. Ninety percent of respondents also agreed that salespeople must learn to work internally with their own organization in order to succeed with clients/customers. More than half the sample (54 percent) agreed with the statement “my organization helps me be agile and creative with my customers” and there was a statistically significant correlation between agreement with this statement and the MPI. The more strongly a participant agreed with the statement, the higher the Market Performance Index (MPI) score was.

PLEASE INDICATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOU AGREE/DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.

RESPONSES	STRONGLY DISAGREE (1)	DISAGREE (2)	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE (3)	AGREE (4)	STRONGLY AGREE (5)	AVERAGE	CORRELATION WITH MPI
I need to constantly adapt my behavior in order to consistently succeed.	1.7%	5.1%	9.8%	51.7%	31.8%	4.07	
Continuous learning is critical to my personal and financial success	1.7%	0.3%	2.0%	37.8%	58.1%	4.50	
My organization helps me be agile and creative with my customers	4.7%	11.8%	29.4%	34.1%	19.9%	3.53	.276**
Salespeople must learn to work internally with their own organization in order to succeed with clients/customers	1.0%	2.4%	6.4%	43.9%	46.3%	4.32	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Note: Only statistically significant correlations are presented

Q17: To be more successful in selling my products or services to clients and prospects, I need:

The average score column indicates that respondents thought “a personal approach to continuous improvement” (average of 3.62) would be the most important factor to help them be more successful in selling their products or services to clients and prospects. This was followed by “better selling and influencing skills” (average of 3.61) and “competitive analysis” (average of 3.49). “A more clearly defined role” (average of 2.40) was the factor that respondents thought they needed the least in order to more successful in selling products or services to clients and prospects.

TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN SELLING MY PRODUCTS OR SERVICES TO CLIENTS AND PROSPECTS, I NEED:

RESPONSES	NOT AT ALL (1)	SMALL EXTENT (2)	MODERATE EXTENT (3)	HIGH EXTENT (4)	VERY HIGH EXTENT (5)	AVERAGE
More Information	10.2%	16.8%	36.8%	27.4%	8.8%	3.08
More product knowledge	13.0%	21.1%	31.3%	26.8%	7.7%	2.95
Better technology	9.8%	24.9%	30.5%	24.2%	10.5%	3.01
More collaboration and support	6.3%	15.1%	23.9%	40.7%	14.0%	3.41
A more clearly defined role	31.2%	24.9%	22.1%	15.8%	6.0%	2.40
Better pay	23.2%	23.2%	27.0%	16.5%	10.2%	2.67
Better relationships internally and externally	7.0%	15.4%	26.7%	33.3%	17.5%	3.39
A personal approach to continuous improvement	5.6%	11.6%	22.5%	35.8%	24.6%	3.62
Better selling and influencing skills	5.3%	13.7%	23.5%	29.5%	28.1%	3.61
Competitive analysis	3.2%	16.1%	27.7%	34.0%	18.9%	3.49
Other	55.2%	4.5%	11.9%	6.0%	22.4%	2.36

Q18: What do you need to know in order to co-create or communicate value in your relationships and conversations with clients and prospects?

In order to co-create or communicate value in relationships and conversations with clients and prospects, respondents indicated that selling skills was the most important content area. Three-quarters of respondents thought selling skills was needed to a high or very high extent. This was followed by industry knowledge, where nearly two-thirds thought it was needed to a high or very high extent, and product knowledge.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW IN ORDER TO CO-CREATE OR COMMUNICATE VALUE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS AND CONVERSATIONS WITH CLIENTS AND PROSPECTS?

RESPONSES	NOT AT ALL (1)	SMALL EXTENT (2)	MODERATE EXTENT (3)	HIGH EXTENT (4)	VERY HIGH EXTENT (5)	AVERAGE
Industry knowledge	2.5%	6.7%	25.3%	43.9%	21.8%	3.76
Product knowledge	3.5%	9.1%	24.6%	38.6%	24.2%	3.71
Selling skills	1.4%	5.6%	18.0%	41.9%	33.1%	4.00
My own company-specific knowledge	3.9%	10.5%	28.8%	35.8%	21.1%	3.60
Sales management skills	6.7%	10.5%	28.4%	34.7%	19.6%	3.50

Q19: How do you learn in order to stay ahead of the competition, your customers, and your peers? (Choose all that apply).

Ninety percent of respondents indicated that they are self-directed and learn on their own in order to stay ahead of the competition, competitors, and peers. Reading books/articles (77 percent), discussion with peers (76 percent), and via an internally coordinated training curriculum (72 percent) were other commonly used methods of learning.

HOW DO YOU LEARN IN ORDER TO STAY AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION, YOUR CUSTOMERS, AND YOUR PEERS?
(CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY).

RESPONSES	PERCENT
Self-directed, on my own	89.5%
Trial and error	42.8%
By observing others	71.6%
By attending a class	43.9%
By synthesizing trends and marketing data	40.4%
By co-creating with customers	46.7%
By reading a book/ articles	76.8%
By listening to digital content	43.5%
By management support	36.5%
Getting coached by someone else (e.g. a Sales Manager or Consultant)	48.8%
Working/meeting with a formal mentor	18.9%
By discussions with peers	75.8%
By searching for information on the internet	70.9%
An internally coordinated training curriculum	72.3%
An externally offered training course	33.7%

Q20: For me to become a trusted business advisor with my clients and prospects, the sales training I receive should focus on:

For a majority of the focus areas listed below, the most commonly selected response option was “high extent,” indicating that respondents would appreciate these topics being included in their sales training. Respondents indicated that in order for them to become a trusted business advisor with their clients and prospects, the sales training they receive should focus on how to manage the customer’s perception of value (an average score of 4.03), thinking more strategically (an average score of 3.89), and being a better consultant (an average score of 3.85).

FOR ME TO BECOME A TRUSTED BUSINESS ADVISOR WITH MY CLIENTS AND PROSPECTS,
THE SALES TRAINING I RECEIVE SHOULD FOCUS ON:

RESPONSES	NOT AT ALL (1)	SMALL EXTENT (2)	MODERATE EXTENT (3)	HIGH EXTENT (4)	VERY HIGH EXTENT (5)	AVERAGE
How to create influence	2.1%	9.1%	28.4%	42.8%	17.5%	3.65
How to develop insight	3.5%	8.4%	23.9%	46.0%	18.2%	3.67
How to manage the customer's perception of value	2.1%	2.5%	17.5%	46.3%	31.6%	4.03
Improving personal effectiveness	2.1%	7.4%	26.0%	42.5%	22.1%	3.75
Creating and closing opportunities	3.2%	7.4%	26.3%	37.9%	25.3%	3.75
Protecting accounts	6.0%	22.8%	32.6%	25.3%	13.3%	3.17
Maintaining accounts	4.9%	19.6%	28.8%	29.5%	17.2%	3.34
Defining and positioning solutions	2.8%	6.3%	23.9%	39.6%	27.4%	3.82
Being a better consultant	3.2%	7.4%	18.9%	42.8%	27.7%	3.85
Thinking more strategically	2.5%	8.4%	17.9%	39.6%	31.6%	3.89
Being a better developer of skills and talent	5.3%	15.1%	27.7%	36.1%	15.8%	3.42
Analyzing data and information	7.4%	16.5%	36.1%	26.7%	13.3%	3.22
Other	57.9%	1.8%	12.3%	5.3%	22.8%	2.33

Q21: In order for me to effectively leverage the sales training I receive, I need:

Sixty-one percent of respondents agree to a high or very high extent that in order for them to effectively leverage the sales training they received, they need frameworks, approaches, and methodologies they can customize. Additionally, 55 percent need tools they can use in the field.

IN ORDER FOR ME TO EFFECTIVELY LEVERAGE THE SALES TRAINING I RECEIVE, I NEED:

RESPONSES	NOT AT ALL (1)	SMALL EXTENT (2)	MODERATE EXTENT (3)	HIGH EXTENT (4)	VERY HIGH EXTENT (5)	AVERAGE
Tools I can use in the field	3.5%	13.7%	27.4%	37.2%	18.2%	3.53
Frameworks, approaches, and methodologies I can customize	1.8%	9.5%	27.7%	41.1%	20.0%	3.68
Specific processes that I must follow all the time	15.1%	22.5%	29.5%	24.2%	8.8%	2.89
Technology that supports the way I forecast deals	7.0%	20.7%	35.1%	24.9%	12.3%	3.15
Qualification processes and activities with my manager	9.8%	16.8%	33.0%	26.3%	14.0%	3.18
Other	64.7%	2.0%	9.8%	9.8%	13.7%	2.06

Q22: Which skills and competencies are crucial to becoming an effective and efficient trusted business advisor? (Choose the three most important).

When asked which skills and competencies are crucial to becoming an effective and efficient trusted business advisor, 61 percent of respondents thought listening was the most important skill. In addition, 43 percent thought problem solving and diagnosis skills and competencies were important. Company-specific processes that support selling workflow and presentation skills were the least important skills, selected by 4 percent of the respondents.

WHICH SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES ARE CRUCIAL TO BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT TRUSTED BUSINESS ADVISOR?
(CHOOSE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT).

RESPONSES	PERCENT
Ethical decision making	22.1%
Problem solving and diagnosis	42.5%
Creativity in the sales process	14.4%
Adapting the sales process to specific buying processes	15.4%
Persuasion	6.7%
Listening	60.7%
Empathy	6.7%
Closing skills	8.8%
Prospecting approaches to uncover new leads	11.2%
Follow-up skills	12.3%
Company-specific processes that support selling workflow	3.5%
Negotiating	5.3%
Relationship building	41.4%
Presentation skills	3.5%
Qualifying prospects	4.9%
Questioning skills	24.6%
Problem solving skills	9.5%

Salespeople

Q23: Besides revenue generation, in what other ways are salespeople different from others in the company? (Choose all that apply).

More than half of the sample of salespeople (56 percent) thought they were different from others in the company because they have to adapt their behavior and actions to different audiences on a regular basis. Additionally, 54 percent of the sales professionals who responded believed they had a higher degree of cross-functional knowledge than others in the company, while 50 percent of the respondents thought salespeople were unique as they were the face of the company. Only 10 percent of the responding salespeople believed they were not different from others in the organization.

BESIDES REVENUE GENERATION, IN WHAT OTHER WAYS ARE SALESPEOPLE DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS IN THE COMPANY?
(CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY).

RESPONSES	PERCENT
We aren't different	10.4%
We care about the customer more than others in our company	17.6%
We have to adapt our behavior and actions to different audiences more regularly	56.3%
We have to know more about our products than other people in our organization	29.0%
We have to know more about the industries we serve than other people in our organization	45.9%
We have to stay more relevant to more people	34.8%
We don't need to be micromanaged	26.9%
We are the face of the company	50.2%
All of the above	38.4%
None of the above	45.2%
A higher degree of cross-functional knowledge (e.g. Psychology, Project Management, Legal Requirements, etc.)	53.8%
A different set of performance requirements and metrics	12.9%
A greater ability to influence customer perception	1.8%
Other	2.9%

Q24: How many specific occupations did you have before entering the sales profession?

On average the respondents had 2 occupations before entering the sales profession. A third of the respondents' first job was in the sales profession

HOW MANY SPECIFIC OCCUPATIONS DID YOU HAVE BEFORE ENTERING THE SALES PROFESSION?

RESPONSES	PERCENT	AVERAGE
0 jobs	33.3%	1.63
1 job	16.1%	
2 jobs	26.5%	
3 jobs	13.3%	
4 jobs	5.0%	
5 jobs	3.6%	
6 jobs	1.4%	
7 jobs	0.0%	
8 jobs	0.0%	
9 jobs	0.4%	
10 jobs	0.0%	
11 jobs	0.0%	
12 jobs	0.4%	

Q25: What motivated you to enter the sales profession in the first place? (Put in order from 1–5).

The potential for higher earnings motivated respondents the most to enter the sales profession, with an average rating of 2.4. This was followed by the reasoning that the profession was a better fit for their skills (average rating of 2.5). The opportunity to meet more/new people motivated them the least (an average rating of 3.1)

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO ENTER THE SALES PROFESSION IN THE FIRST PLACE? (PUT IN ORDER FROM 1–5).

RESPONSES	AVERAGE
Potential for higher earnings	2.36
Better fit with skills	2.50
Better opportunity for advancement	2.84
Opportunity to meet more/new people	3.10
Other	3.21

