

Dr. Niharika
Department of applied economics and commerce, Patna University
Semester-4
Paper: - Sales and Distribution Management (MB MC 41)
UNIT -II
e-mail- nihaarika.red@gmail.com
Phone number- 7903648114

SALES TRAINING PROGRAM

Importance of sales training

The success of an organisation depends on the effectiveness of its sales force to convince customers to make the purchase. As Salesforce performance has a significant impact on the bottom line of an organisation, it is necessary for sales managers to ask themselves how they can improve the performance of their sales force personnel. Very few sales people have an inborn talent to sell. Not all the salespersons are effective. Many acquire the art of selling with proper training for the purpose of a sales training program is to increase the effectiveness and productivity of the Salesforce and to refine its selling techniques.

Training is playing a very important role in improving organisation performance, it plays an important role in helping new employees perform well in the organisation. It also helps existing employees are just to newer (KSAs) knowledge, skills and abilities as well as technologies and methods are working, which are introduced in the organisation.

Benefits of sales training

A super salesman is one who possesses complete knowledge about the product or service he is selling and complements the knowledge with his superior selling skills. A poorly trained Sales force, on the other hand, lacks product knowledge and the desired selling skills. The failure of a company to properly train its sales force results in the sales people adopting a trial-and-error method of selling. This has an adverse impact on the company's image and affects customer relations. Inadequate training leads to the poor performance of the sales force. By providing proper training to the sales force, a company can increase its effectiveness and productivity. Moreover, proper training makes the salespersons more confident and enthusiastic about their jobs. This is reflected in their performance and they become more convincing and confident during their sales talks. This, in turn, enhances the company's image and improves customer relations.

Sales training motivates the sales force to perform even better. It makes the sales people feel useful, valued and important. It builds in them a loyalty toward the organisation and plays a role in bringing down Salesforce turnover. Thus, companies, in a way, try to address their growing concern for Sales force turnover by providing sales training. By providing proper training to their sales force companies help them in their efforts to earn more commission by selling more of the products or services. The higher earning capacity

and satisfaction that training provides, reduces the urge among salespersons, to change jobs.

Sales training becomes all the more essential for selling complex product like sophisticated equipment, turbines, and control and really panels. Spelling of complex products requires meticulous planning and effective execution of the plan. And this, does not come under the forte of an average sales person, but requires proper training. Thus, sales training helps salespersons accomplish the sales of complex products successfully and speedily.

Sales training programs

Training programs for sales personnel help organisations increase the productivity and effectiveness of their sales force, which in turn increases the profitability of organisations. A sales training program consists of five steps:

- 1) Defining training aims /objective
- 2) Deciding and preparing the training content
- 3) Selecting training methods to
- 4) Implementing training program
- 5) Evaluating the training programs

1). Defining training aims/objective

While designing a training program, various aspects are taken into consideration. First, a consensus should be obtained among all the key decision-makers of the organisation regarding the training objectives. A training program may have diverse objectives. It may aim to increase sales or increase profits. A training program's objective may even be to open new distribution channels or simply new account penetration. Thus, while designing a training program, the key decision-makers in the organisation should arrived at a consensus regarding the objective of the training program. Other areas of concern that need to be addressed by the decision-makers while designing the training program include review of the existing performance standards, appraisal system, compensation plan, the organisation structure, product or services, current competitors, sales cycle of the company, optimum level of sales activity and technique being used to measure the Salesforce performance.

2). Deciding and preparing the training content

In the next stage we are going to decide who should be trained, identified training needs and determined how much training is required and based on that we are preparing the training content. The core training content would actually determined will be based or will depend upon the training needs or the training aims. So, depending upon whether it is an initial sales training program for a sales training program and determine depending upon whether the aims of the program the content for the program is designed whether it could either be imparting new knowledge skills and abilities to the freshly hired sales trainees or it could be updating the knowledge, skills and abilities of trainee.

So according for existing employees so accordingly the content of the program meant for sales trainees and those meant for existing employees will vary.

Selecting training methods

The third step is selecting the training methods. Now a proper match must exist between the purpose of the training and the training method which is adopted. So, there has to be no match between the training purpose as well as the methods because not all kind of methods would actually meet the training needs, different methods suit different kinds of training needs. So, depending upon what the training aim is and what the training content and who is going to be trained, we are able to determine what are the different kind of methods that we should be using.

So, it is important to select such training methods which can convey the training content in the best possible way. Once the training is completed on the other hand the selection of an inappropriate method would be to wastage of resources both in terms of time and money because if or an inappropriate method is chosen, it would not be able to meet the training needs or the training requirements. And in that case after the training is over the person would go back on the job, but he would not be able to bring the desired performance and so it would be realized that entire training exercise has been a waste. So, the selection of an appropriate method is very essential and it such method should be chosen which would help meet the training needs or the training requirement in the most effective manner.

Training methods can be divided into two categories:-

- 1). on the job training
- 2). off the job training

On-the-job Training

This is considered to be the most effective method of training to train the employees at the operational level. That is why vast majority of training programs organised are of on-the-job variety. Under this method, the sales force is trained on-the-job training at his work place. This enables him to get training under the same working conditions and with the same processes, materials and equipments that he will be using ultimately.

The responsibility of the training is given to his immediate supervisor, who know exactly what the trainee should learn to do or to some outside instructor, who is the training specialist in the field. Effectiveness of the on-the-job training depends primarily upon qualified trainer.

The trainees observe, they watch, they listen and they ask questions and queries and then they are made to perform. So, while they are performing the trainer is able to assess as to whether the trainee is able to learn or has been able to imbibe what is being taught to him. So, it is training here involves an actual situation and work life situation where the trainees are put on specific jobs and they are given a job experience. Now the method is

very flexible and it involves a, it exchange of information of sharing of job experiences and knowledge by between the trainer and the trainee. And this method is very suitable for jobs that call for active participation and performance by the sales people on the job.

So, while being on the job the trainee is able to learn. Now for example, a freshly hired training may be made to assist another salesperson with 2 years or 3 years of experience in a business to business scenario. Now as this salesperson with the two or three year experience goes and makes sales call to his client the freshly hired recruit goes with him. He watches how the salesperson is dealing with the client, he also watches how he is made the presentation is being made how demonstrations are being made how queries are being addressed or handled. So, in this way he graduate by watching by listening by through day to day constant being in touch with his mentor with is trainee that the freshly hired trainee it gets to learn the job.

So, it is something which is done hands on and the salesperson is trains another buy in by showing or by exhibiting how you know there is presentations are made, how clients are to be dealt with. Now the trainee is watching all this listening to all this and imbibing all this and then one fine day the trainer or the mentor would ask the trainee to make the presentation or to handle the quest customer query or complaint. So, in this way the trainer would also get to know whether the trainee has imbibed what is being taught to him and if he is a quickly learner or if he is a slow learner and if further attempts have to be made to train him better.

Off the Job Training

The second kind of methods are what we refer to as the off-the-job methods now here the of the job training methods the training is conducted away from the place of the job it is an expensive method which helps in over imparting overall development of employees. And, but this is done and not in at the place of the job, but it is done away on in classrooms, in lecture halls or in seminars and in symposiums and conference. So, this is another way which can be another method of training.

Now, we will discuss about some of these methods and elaborate following them:-

1). Lecture:-

- lecture is a very commonly used instruction aid which involves a face to face interaction between the trainer and the trainees and it could be one to many, where there is one trainer and several trainees.
- Trainees watch and listen they ask questions and the trainer replies and its very extensively used as a training method
- its very economical because a large number of audience can be dealt with or a large number of trainees can be dealt with at the same time.
- Its effectiveness of course, can be increased by using multimedia aids or charts graphs demonstrations etc.

2). Demonstration:-

- demonstrations are very important when it comes to sales training
- it is showing to prospects as to how our new product works, is very important for sales personnel for conducting successful sales call.
- the trainees are actually shown how things are operated, how demonstrations are made so that they can learn and then they can replicate this behavior at the clients place.
- demonstrations are used very commonly in cases where a product needs to be operated or to be better explained to the prospective customer and showing to prospects as to how a new product works or a new technology works is something which is very important for sales personnel for conducting successful sales calls.
- effective sales trainers rely heavily on demonstrations for imparting field training to the sales people. So, the sales trainees are made to watch the trainer who will demonstrate product operation in the operation penalization of a product or who demonstrate a new technology.

3). Role playing:-

- Trainees are given such situations and they ask to act out their parts or their roles. So, here what we are talking of with selling situations trainees are explained or told about the selling situation, they are assigned their different roles and they are asked to act out those roles.
- this method helps develop the confidence of the sales people, it enhances their social skills needed props are also provided to trainees to make things more real life. For example, trainees are divided into different teams and the trainer a lot different parts of customers and sale representative to the trainees
- this would help them simulate various selling situations for better understanding of customer handling strategy. So, the trainer will actually divide the trainees into teams and a lot parts of customer roles and sales representative roles to trainees. So, some of them will become customer, some of them will play as play roles as sales persons and the entire selling situation will be simulated for better understanding as to how customers should be handled.
- Role playing is a very flexible approach and it helps in recognizing the sales skills of trainees, it promotes generation of new ideas.
- it may fail in case people are not actively participating in the exercise and it is being dominated only by few of them, in that case the trainees will not be able to learn much also.

4). Case study:-

A history of some event or set of circumstances, with the relevant details, examined by the trainees.

- i. Those in which the trainees diagnose the causes of a particular problem.

- ii. Those in which the trainees set out to solve a particular problem.

trainees who discuss the cases must be encouraged to identify the real issues in the case they must be encouraged to analyze the facts immoral which emerge from the case and must be stimulated to offer solutions, which are very creative or very novel in nature which will help solve the business problem or the or a situation which the company is facing.

5.) Discussion:-

- Knowledge, ideas and opinions on a particular subject are freely exchanged among the trainees and the instructor.
- It is suitable where the application of information is a matter of opinion. Also when attitudes need to be induced or changed.

6). Gaming:-

- Gaming another method which is used in training is gaming now also called a simulation and very similar to role playing.
- Players are selected to assume decision making roles across various rounds of the game.

For example, a game in which trainees are divided into various teams and they could be asked to act out as a team of negotiators from different companies and the one team which closes the sale in or closes the deal at the best bid for the company would win. So, it is basically where the trainers are divided into teams and situations are placed which act more like business games and they are to play out different roles these games could pertain to negotiations, they could pertain to demonstrations they could pertain to presentations and team which performs the best is the one which actually wins. So, it adds a flavour of entertainment and then two three as amongst participants and, but of course, it requires a huge amount of great amount of planning to decide on the games and successfully implement them in the classroom.

7. Online courses:-

- online courses can be used for both for initial sales training program as well as for continued sales training programs.
- Online videos of instructional material in the form of videos or presentations are shared with the trainees and it is a very suitable method when trainees are hugely dispersed, they are geographically scattered and they cannot be brought to a particular location for attending a training program.
- trainees must be asked to submit regular assignments to make sure that they are going through the material, otherwise most trainees will not want to go through the material and entire exercise may be of may be futile. So, trainees must be asked to submit regular assignment.
- trainees going through the different modules in the online course and at the end exams may be conducted to just the effectiveness of the online training program

whether it has been effective in imparting training to the to the trainees or changes need to be made so that such online courses can be made more effective in future.

Implementing the training program

After deciding on a training method the next step is the implementing the training program. Now a sound execution of a training program is very critical for the conducting of conducting an effective training program.

It involves making decision with respect:-

- Who will be the trainees?
- Who will be the trainer?
- Who will conduct the training program?
- Where and when will the training program be conducted?

❖ who will be the trainees of course

- initial sales training programs are organised for all new sales personnel
- Decision making with respect to who the trainees will be becomes complicated and complex when it is a continuing sales training program.
- The four common criteria which are used for selecting trainees for training programs, when it is a continuous sales training program and these relate to *reward for good performance* or you know an *action against poor performance* or *seniority* or *convenience of trainees and trainer*

❖ Who will conduct the training program?

- Many times companies have a separate department and a trained sales staff which actually conducts training programs there are corporate staff trainers who are trained for this exercise.
- sales executives with experience can also take part in the training program and they would share their field experiences.
- They would share their knowledge they would say their skills and abilities which are of crucial importance especially when it comes to preparing new employees for field training.
- Experts outside the company can also be conducted to offer specialized training programs.

❖ Where and when will the training take place?

❖ Timing of the training

- Timing for initials sales training usually depends upon the timing when large recruitments are made.

- So, in most cases as and when a new a huge lot of recruits are hired the company plans its training programs. Generally it is months of May or July, when people graduate from colleges and are actually hired by the company. So, they have a exhaustive long 6 months to 1 month training; 6 months to 1 year long training program meant for them. So, this is generally done when a large scale recruitments are made.
- Timing for continuing sales training program depends upon a lot of factors like the sales season for the time availability, with the prospective trainees or if its need based.
- Need based here meaning that if there is an urgency for a training because new product is being launched or a new market is being ventured into. So, based on the need and the urgency is continuous sales training program would be. The duration and when it is to be conducted would be decided upon.
- ❖ Place of the training
 - Centralized:
 - centralized training could be held in the corporate offices.
 - This leads to better product training; however, huge travel costs and neglect of territories while the salesperson is away can lead to problems.
 - Also training location should be decided in such a way that it becomes easy for people to reach the location and again one needs to give a huge amount of attention to you know cost the cost factor in terms of boarding and lodging which need to be taken care of.
 - Decentralised:
 - ◆ Training can also be decentralized, companies can train sales persons near their future territories, but until unless such training programs are closely monitored they may end up being poor quality and the training program may be may be may dilute with respect to quality issues.
 - ◆ Companies may have either, the companies may either decide to have a centralized training, already centralized training of course and both of them have their pros and cons.

5). Evaluating the training program:-

- ❖ The next step here is evaluating the training program.
- ❖ Evaluating a training program is very crucial because of the huge costs which are involved in training

- ❖ evaluation will help provide an answer to the fact that have we been able to achieve our objectives? if yes fine, but if we have not then we need to devise or redesign our training program so that better training programs can be conducted in future.
- ❖ Evaluation helps provides scope for conducting future training programs more effectively.
- ❖ Trainees should be asked to fill up a detailed feedback form in the end, feedback about the course about the content about the delivery about the trainers etc.
- ❖ There after once they are placed on the job their day to day performance may be measured and the reporting authority maybe give feedback as to the kind of performance. the trainee is delivering while on job.
- ❖ the training program formally concludes, written tests may be conducted and to evaluate the training program.
- ❖ Observations may also be made to check the extent to which trainees are being able to apply, what they are being taught.
- ❖ while written test would be more you know in pens, paper and pencil based on online.
- ❖ The observations may be more with respect to asking salespeople to perform certain acts of behavior or react to certain kinds of selling situations as in the case of business games.
- ❖ mapping the performance of salesperson after the training period ends while they are on the field can also be used as a measure for performing for performance evaluation.