

# **SALES COACHING AND LEARNING:** STELLAR SALES RESULTS BEGIN WITH TRAINING

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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO PREPARING YOUR  
PEOPLE FOR BETTER SALES THE RIGHT WAY

# Let's Begin with the Basics.

The success of your business hinges on your company's ability to sell well, but the sales process and strategy will look different for every business, product, and service.

Whether you're operating with a large and experienced in-house sales team, selling through channel partners and distributors, or just beginning to develop your sales staff, there's one thing every business has in common:

**sales successes skyrockets when you invest in sales training and coaching.**



## Why Invest in Sales Training and Sales Coaching?

Let's say your sales people have been performing well for a long time. Let's say you're fantastic at hiring, and your newcomers show up on day one with all the qualifications they need to begin closing deals and bringing in the cash. Let's even say your channel partners and distributors move your product without a problem.

That's all great news, but things will change.

Let's look at the more likely scenario: you're trying to solve a number of sales problems and employee retention issues. Competitors will elbow their way into your market. Other companies will tempt your employees with opportunities and rewards. You will always be challenged to sell more faster, and you will always be challenged to create an environment where people want to sell for you.

What if we told you **it all comes back to the beginning**? It all comes back to coaching your sales teams on how to succeed.

## What is the Difference Between Sales Learning, Training, and Coaching?

Sales coaching goes hand in hand with sales training, but it has the power to elevate your training program several more steps, helping your sales team succeed quicker and sustain their success for much longer.

Sales learning is the process your people go through first to understand and retain the information you're dishing out in your training and coaching programs.

If **sales training** is the ice cream in your sundae, **sales coaching** is the hot fudge, sprinkles, whipped cream, cherry and the bowl that's holding everything so that your ice cream doesn't fall flat on the ground. **Sales learning** is the experience the person who's enjoying the sundae is having.



**Spoiler alert: they're enjoying it.**

While sales training is absolutely imperative, it's the coaching and the positive experience many companies miss completely.

## What History Tells Us About Selling

The word “sales” often comes with a negative connotation. We all know consumers can be wary of trusting salespeople who are just trying to close the next deal.

Today, the rate at which information flows and technology changes means that people can't get away as easily with selling a sub-par product that the consumer doesn't need. Client testimonials are generally a click away, shrewd targeted advertising tactics often mean your competitors are lurking around every Google search, and online shopping means fewer face-to-face opportunities with your customer.

In some ways, it's easier than ever for a consumer to make a decision because all of the information they need is at their fingertips. They can make a decision and click to purchase in a matter of seconds.

On the other hand, consumers may miss out on what more traditional sales tactics provided — like an in-person salesperson who was able to answer specific questions or the ability to test and try products before they buy.

It's no secret that salespeople have to be very savvy and creative today. Whether they're standing in a storefront, making phone calls, or sitting behind a computer sorting through inbound marketing leads, they have to be specifically trained and continually learning or else they risk wasting time and money chasing leads they will never close.

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## Evaluate Your Sales Team

### 10 Questions to Ask About Your Staff

1. **Do they understand** your customers' common pain point(s)?
2. **Do you trust** them to represent your brand well?
3. **Do they understand** your brand, product, services in detail?
4. **Do they know and understand** your competitors?
5. **Are they up to date** with news and information in your industry?
6. **Do they know** where to find answers to the questions to which don't have an answer?
7. **Can they use** the necessary tools to do their job well?
8. **Do they know** how to up-sell the customer well and/or make sure the customer returns?
9. **Do they communicate** with their peers, managers, and customers well?
10. **Do they have** the opportunities and motivation to increase sales?

## What Data Tells Us About Sales Training and Coaching

Sales training and coaching is an investment, there's no way around it. The question is: What is the return on investment?

An [Association for Talent and Development \(ATD\)](#) report surveying 200 sales training professionals showed organizations spent an average of \$2,326 on training per salesperson per year.

The same report revealed 42 percent of those surveyed said sales training helps their organization "meet their sales goals to a high or very high extent" while the same number reported "it helped meet sales goals to a moderate extent."

In addition, [HubSpot reports](#) the average Sales Development Representative stays in his or her position for an average of 2.8 years and takes 4.1 months to ramp up.

Onboarding and training new employees is almost always significantly more expensive than continuing to train current employees. In addition to the dollars spent on actual training, consider the amount of time it will take for that representative to catch up to the productivity levels of his or her predecessor.

Lastly, training and development opportunities continue to be one of the top benefits prospects look for in today's job market. When companies are willing to invest in their employees, their employees are more willing to stay longer and are more likely to be productive.

The question is:  
What is the return  
on investment?



# What Are the Key Components of Excellent Sales Training?

A large part of the investment in a sales training and coaching program is the initial investment it takes to simply get started. Whether you're assessing your current training program or looking to start from scratch, here are **five key components you need to consider**:



1

Microlearning

2

Gamification

3

Blended  
in-person and  
digital formats

4

Continuous  
learning

5

Coaching

# 1 What is Microlearning and How Do You Deliver It Well?

Microlearning is a training tactic that involves breaking large portions of information up into smaller pieces so that the trainee can understand and retain it more easily.

Think about handing one employee a textbook to read and issuing one large test after he's done reading it. Then, split that same textbook into chapters for another employee and ask him to take a short quiz at the end of each chapter. Administer that same large test to the second employee after he's worked through each chapter and quiz.

## Who do you think will perform better on their final test?

Statistically, the second employee will score higher on the test and be more likely to remember and apply the information he learned long after the test.

As you're creating your microlearning course, keep these three steps in mind:

### 1. CREATE

Create content in small pieces that people can read and review in a few minutes or less. If you can make the content interactive and/or include images or video, even better.

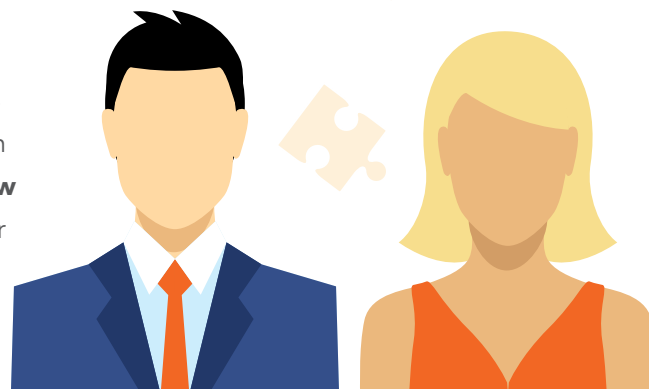
### 2. CHECK

Quiz your trainee on their knowledge at the end of each micro lesson to make sure they understand the most important pieces.

### 3. REITERATE

Weave previous lesson content and quiz questions into future content and quizzes so your trainees keep seeing the most crucial information.

Remember, the end goal here isn't to trip your employees up or make training difficult. The point is to equip your salespeople to do their job well. Keep content simple, to the point, and reiterate often so that **the important information you need your people to know becomes embedded in them as knowledge**. Be consistent in your delivery and in your follow up. If you make this a priority, they will make it a priority.



## 2 What is Gamification?

Gamification is the process of adding game-like elements to a task to encourage participation and engagement.

Gamifying your sales training program is all about **positive reinforcement and incentives**. The idea is that you create an environment where people are recognized regularly for their achievements and return to work motivated to improve every day. In this case, the task we're gamifying is that actual training, itself.

**The elements of a successful gamified sales training program are:**

1

**CLEAR  
EXPECTATIONS**

Let's begin with setting expectations. One of the top challenges training managers face is their employees' refusal to commit time and effort into their own training program. If no one is holding them accountable, they will likely ignore the training materials you issue them and continue to forge their own path, no matter how unsuccessful it is. You have to communicate to your staff and partners that they will be rewarded for prioritizing their own learning. Show them how much training you expect them to complete and in what time frame.

Then, set up a leaderboard. This is the positive reinforcement piece of the puzzle that's absolutely **crucial** to the success of your sales training program. Create a space where people can see their names rise and fall according to how much and how successfully they're moving through the training program.

Finally, offer meaningful incentives or prizes. Make it worth it for people to participate in your program at all. For some companies, that's going to be monetary bonuses for people who reach the top of the leaderboard. For others, it may be store merchandise or gift cards. Still others may use something as simple as virtual badges. But, just like leaderboards, it's what the object or prize signifies. It's more about being recognized for a job well done than it is about the prize.

2

**A  
LEADERBOARD**

3

**MEANINGFUL  
PRIZES**

**Are you skeptical a leaderboard will make any difference with your employees?** We were, too, until we heard a Ted Talk by Tali Sharot. In it she explains how a hospital was struggling to enforce hand-washing rules before and after entering a patient's room. They tried posting compliance rules and even installed a video camera. Nothing increased the percentage of employees washing their hands until they installed an electronic board that publicly showed how many people were washing their hands.

**The result?**

Hand washing skyrocketed to **more than 90 percent compliance**.

It was positive reinforcement that did the trick. The group could physically see their score increasing, so they kept improving. It was a leaderboard that gave the hospital the results it needed.





### 3 Blending In-Person and Digital Training

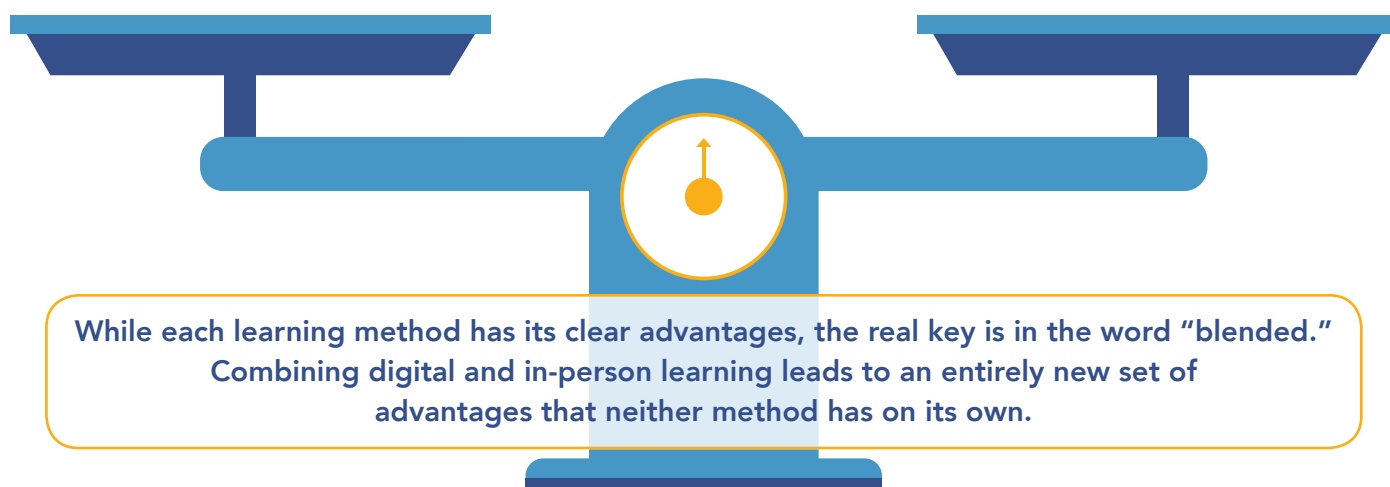
In-person, or classroom, training and digital training each have their own pros and cons. At Bigtincan, we strongly believe in **a healthy balance between the two.**

#### In-person Training

- Ability to hold attention longer
- Control over the learning environment and schedule
- Ability to ask and answer questions
- Discussion opportunities
- Attendance can be mandatory
- Hands-on learning opportunities
- Peer-to-peer learning

#### Digital Training

- Can be completed on a mobile device
- Easy for microlearning format
- Collect quiz and assessment data easily
- Digital notes are easily searchable
- Lends itself well to a leaderboard
- Completed at the learner's convenience
- Information can be recalled any time
- Usually less expensive



#### What do you get when you combine classroom and digital learning?

First, you cover more ground faster. A lecture or in-class activity stays in the classroom. However, when you add follow-up materials to your digital learning platform for learners to explore later, they have the opportunity to take a deeper dive into the information they gathered in class.

By blending both methods, you reach those who learn by hearing, seeing, doing, and reading materials, not just one type of learner.

Opportunities to reiterate your content increase significantly. With microlearning, we explained the

importance of driving home the most crucial information with small quizzes and weaving previous lesson content into future lessons. When you add classroom training, you have another stage from which to reiterate the most important information.

Possibly most important of all, blended learning strategies have proven to decrease training costs while increasing ROI, according to a [Develop Intelligence report](#).

After all, the reason we even talk about training in the first place is so that companies can increase their earnings and decrease their costs. It's that simple.

## 4 Continuous Learning

The fourth key to building a successful training and coaching program is to prioritize learning for the duration of your employees' career with your company. Training isn't a one-and-done exercise to be completed during the onboarding process.

On the contrary, **training should be continuous.**

Information moves and changes extremely fast. Not to mention your employees are being bombarded with information from every angle — social media, news feeds, emails, and alerts on their phones and watches. It's difficult to tell the valuable and important information apart from the noise.

In order to help your employees consume the best content available, you should build a training program that combines two types of content delivered to your employees on a regular basis.

The two types of content are:

### Original Content:

**Created by your organization for your employees.**

Original content is created internally and serves the purpose of teaching your employees about things specific to your organization, product, service, and more. This content is generally branded with your logo and written in your company's unique voice.

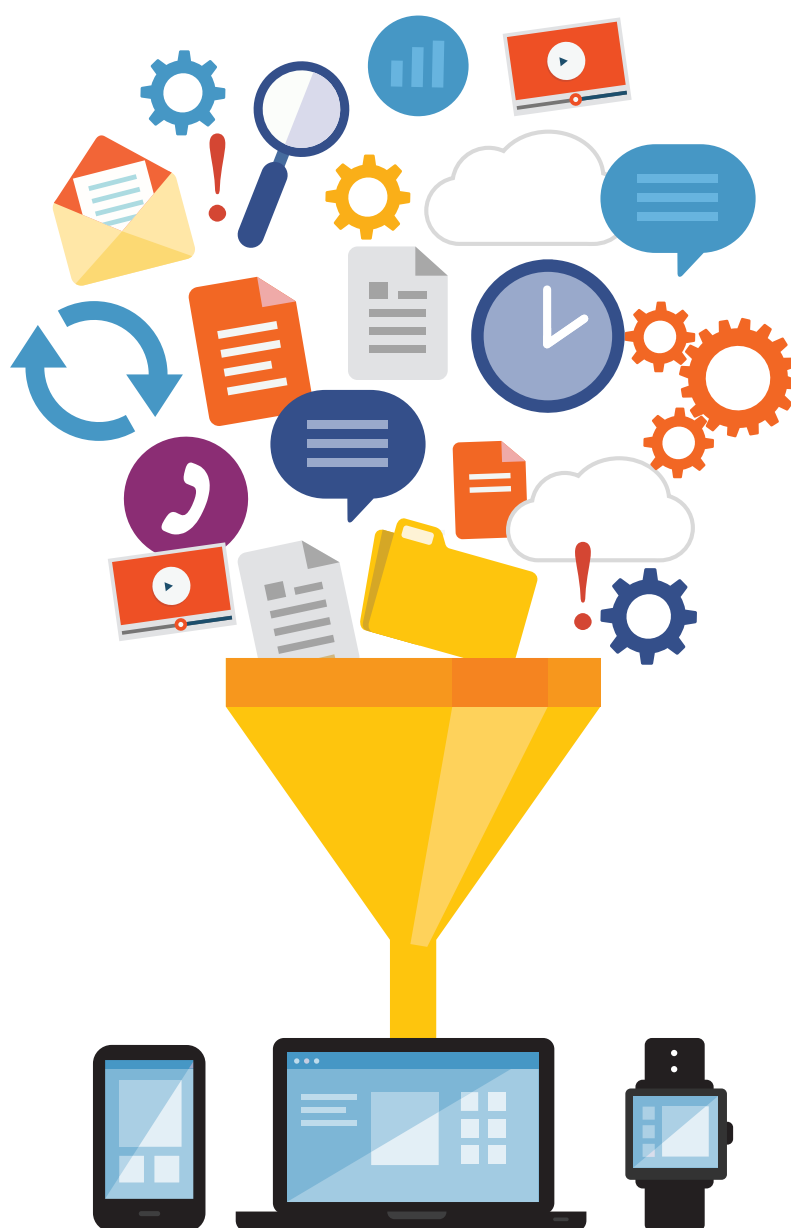
Examples of original content are things like company mission and vision statements, proprietary information about your products, internal policies, or strategic sales strategies.

### Curated Content:

**Valuable and vetted content that already exists on other platforms or in other mediums.**

Curated content is pulled from outside sources that your company respects and finds valuable. For example, Ted Talks, YouTube tutorials, podcasts, articles that pertain to your industry, and webinars from industry leaders and influencers.

With the amount of education available online, you don't need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to content. Gathering up information that's already out there and putting it in front of your employees will save you time and money in the long run.



After creating and curating content, your goal is to deliver that content in a scheduled and continuous manner. We recommend you map out your content delivery schedule in 30-to-90-day blocks. Keep your schedule consistent so that your employees get used to receiving and interacting with content regularly. If you're sporadic with your delivery, they will be sporadic in their participation.

Deliver new content at a minimum of once per week. More preferably, deliver at least one piece of **created** content per week, supplemented by 2-3 pieces of **curated** content per week in order to keep your program fresh.



## Easy Ways to Curate Content

1.

### **Set Google Alerts.**

Focus on keywords, industry players, important brands, etc.

2.

### **Utilize a content curation platform.**

Tools like Apple News and Feedly can organize news by topic.

3.

### **Follow influencers on your social media platforms.**

Engage with them often.

4.

### **Ask employees what resources they use.**

Encourage sharing information in a community forum.

5.

### **Attend events.**

Ask for permission to share slides, recordings, etc.

## 5 Enhance Sales Training with Sales Coaching

Last, but certainly not least, you need to increase the effectiveness of your training program with sales coaching. Building a training program that incorporates microlearning, gamification, in-person and digital learning, and continuous learning is the bulk of your task. But, adding a coaching element elevates your training program exponentially.

There are several ways to add sales coaching to your training program.

**First, consider a mentorship program.** Pair your employees up with someone who has more experience than they do and require that they spend a certain amount of time working together. Model the mentorship relationship at the highest levels in your company so that your executives are leading by example.

**Create content for your mentors or coaches on how to coach successfully.** Adding this responsibility to your coaches will require extra time and effort on their part. Make it as easy as possible on them by providing great content they can use, and help them build time for coaching into their schedule.

**Finally, offer video coaching as an option.** With video coaching, you aren't limited to mentor/mentee relationships in the same office. Your employees can leverage video conferencing to check in at their own convenience.

Remember, not all video coaching has to happen live. Your employees benefit from hands on training and honest feedback. But, it can be hard to practice things like customer interactions or sales presentations when opportunities for developing employees are few and far between. Help them build confidence by performing these in-person tasks on video and sending their recording to their mentor. Then, the mentor can watch the sales presentation on his or her own time and deliver meaningful feedback to the trainee.

Practice makes perfect, and it's much more effective for employees to practice what they've learned in a real-life scenario like video coaching requires.

### Tips for Effective Video Coaching

- Create assignments based on real world scenarios
- Set time limits on each assignment
- Provide learners examples of past video assignments
- Offer feedback via video in addition to written notes
- Always provide positive and constructive feedback
- Give extra leaderboard points for video assignments
- Deliver video assignments on a regular basis
- Always test your audio and video quality before you send content



## 10 Commandments of Great Sales Training

1.

### Be Useful

The fastest way to kill a training program is to force your learners to waste their time learning things they will never use. Target your training program to individuals so that they see and understand the bigger purpose behind completing their training.

2.

### Remain Consistent

Your learners will follow your lead. If you prioritize training and deliver it on a regular basis, they will learn to work time for training into their busy schedules. If you go several weeks or months without delivering new content, training will slip on their priority list.

3.

### Stay Up to Date

Information changes quickly. The last thing you want is for your employees to learn irrelevant information. Make sure you're continually updating your training materials to include the latest and most important information available.

4.

### Don't Overwhelm

We can't stress the importance of microlearning enough. Make sure your employees are able to keep up with training by delivering it in small, bite-size pieces. Keep their training schedule manageable and flexible, and they will thank you.

5.

### Be Creative

Your learners are used to consuming content on YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest. They will be more engaged with your information if it's designed and produced well. They are less likely to remember black and white text than they are an interesting video.

6.

### Provide Incentives

Gamify your training program with leaderboards and meaningful rewards so your employees actually want to participate. Give them a positive reason to prioritize and complete their training instead of focusing on negative consequences.

7.

### Make Training Accessible

Your employees are busy. Make training accessible to them on their mobile device so they can access it any time. Create content that's easily searchable so they can recall information quickly when they need it.

8.

### Add a Coaching Element

Coaches personalize a training program and provide an added layer of accountability. Who better to learn from than a person who has already "been there, done that?" Video coaching also adds hands-on experience your learners won't get in other formats.

9.

### Plan Ahead

Creating and maintaining a sales training and coaching program is hard work. Plan ahead so that you always have something new for your learners to consume while keeping space open in case unforeseeable training needs present themselves.

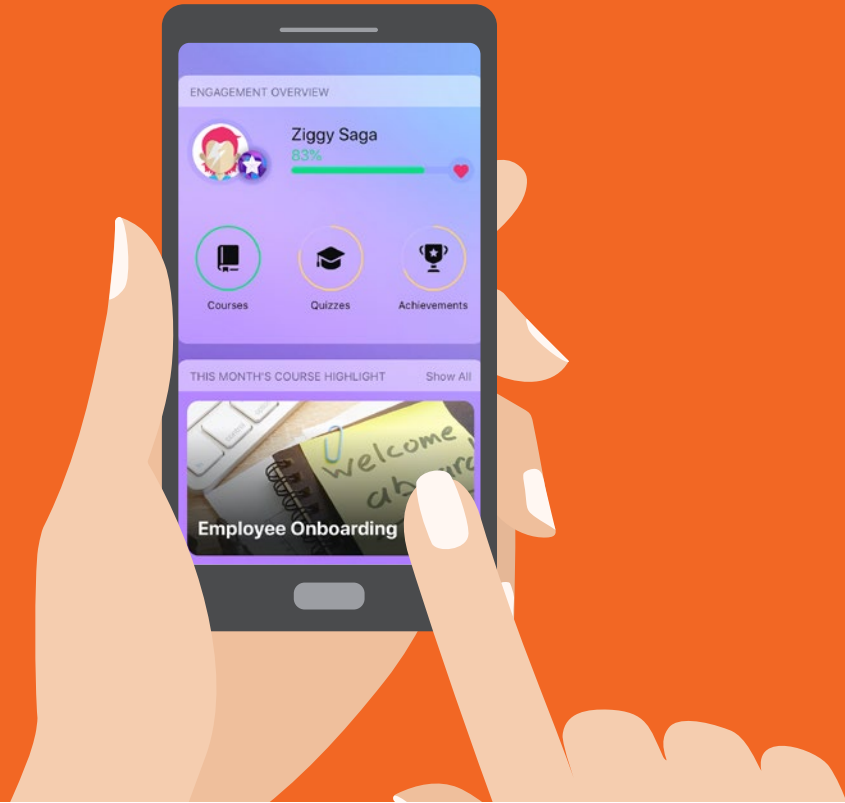
10.

### Never Stop Training

Create and curate content for every level of salesperson who exists on your team. There should never be a point where a senior salesperson gains enough experience to stop learning. There's always somewhere to improve and something new to learn.

# How Technology Can Help.

We can't stress enough how important it is to **put training in the palm of your learners' hands**. Whether your sales teams are working remotely or from a single office, people need to be able to access their training materials on their mobile devices.

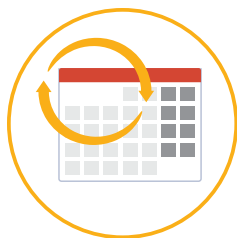


## Build a Mobile Training Program

Microlearning in particular is perfect for mobile consumption. Let your trainees read and take quizzes during their morning train commute or in the waiting room of a client's office. When training happens in short snippets, they can be learning continuously and on the go.

Moreover, a mobile training platform allows your salespeople to pull up information when they need it. There will be a day when a client or prospect or consumer asks a question that your sales employee won't be able to answer. If you're using a mobile training tool that's easily searchable, they should be able to call up the answer with just a few taps of their phone or tablet.

Mobile devices are also the easiest way to reach your people and keep training at the forefront of their priority list. The majority of your sales employees are attached to their mobile devices. Push notifications and email alerts will bring their attention to the training content you deliver, right when you deliver it. It's much easier to ignore or forget training content when it's buried on a to-do list or trapped in a CMS that your learner struggles to navigate.



## Automate Sales Training Delivery

You know consistently delivering learning material is key to your sales training success. We've also explained how important it is to plan ahead and schedule your content delivery. To make sure your delivery is safe from human error, automate the process.

Use a sales enablement or training tool with a built-in scheduling feature. That way, you can create and curate content in batches and schedule it in a way that makes sense. If you're following our 30-to-90-day rule, **you should be able to schedule 90 percent of your content delivery ahead of time.** That way, you know your learners are becoming accustomed to a routine. Then, as new information and content arises, you can weave it into your schedule as needed.



## Create a Great User Experience with Attractive Design

Companies tend to think about the user experience more often when creating something in which their customers will interact. **Too often, companies forget to prioritize design and user experience for their own employees.**

When it comes to the apps and software your employees use, great UX and UI are essential. Just like your customers, your employees will become discouraged and disengaged with the tools you give them if those tools aren't attractive and easy to use. Gone are the days where employees will take the time to search through clunky old software. If you aren't providing them with intuitive learning and training, they will leave you for a company that does.

## User Interface and Design Checklist



Is your app or software...

### Easy to learn?

Can users navigate it with common sense?

### Efficient?

Does it save the user's time and the organization's resources?

### Effective?

Are people using it, and is there evidence it's producing results?

### Elegant?

Are you proud of how it looks and functions?

You don't have to guess whether your internal tools follow the above criteria. Our formula will guide you to providing a great user experience from the beginning.



## Open Up Lines of Communication

Traditionally, there's a line of communication from the top down, especially within big businesses. Executives and managers have the ability and the authority to communicate with their employees. But, it's more rare that employees have the ability to send feedback up the ladder.

There's a big problem with this one-way flow of communication: if managers have learning and development in place that's not working for their employees, their system is broken and no one will know it needs fixing.

Use a learning and development platform that allows for surveys and forums to **keep communication open and moving in all directions**. Schedule simple and anonymous surveys throughout your training program so that learners can tell you what they like and what they don't like. Then, adapt your content accordingly.

Further, utilize a tool that allows peers to discuss topics in forums. That way, if questions or confusion arises, they can discuss it amongst themselves. Forums like these help avoid two major pain points: fear of asking questions and taking unnecessary time away from managers. People who are afraid to ask questions risk continuing on in their job confused, or worse, spreading false information. On the other hand, people who ask too many questions cost their superiors valuable time and energy. Communication features like forums solve both problems.



## Collect Data You Can Use

Like any tool or software your business uses, your sales training platform needs to have a positive return on investment. You can't track the costs or benefits of your training and development tool unless you have clear data to analyze.

**Choose a training platform that offers an intuitive reporting feature.** It should pull in data like participation numbers, quiz scores, content viewed or completed, engagement scores, and time spent. In addition, you should be able to collect corresponding sales data. For instance, do people who engage with more content or have higher quiz scores also hit higher sales goals?

Data should also be able to be compared to data from your previous tool or historical data collected from not using a tool at all. For example, you should be able to see how salespeople using your platform perform compared to before they were onboarded.

# Wrapping Up Your Sales Training and Coaching Guide

Developing an effective sales training and coaching program is no easy task. It takes a lot of time, energy, and effort, but choosing the right training platform to deliver your program helps.

**Curious to see how you can leverage Bigtincan technology to take your sales training program to the next level?**

**Contact us today for a free demo.**