

How to: Leverage Sales Meetings for Better Performance

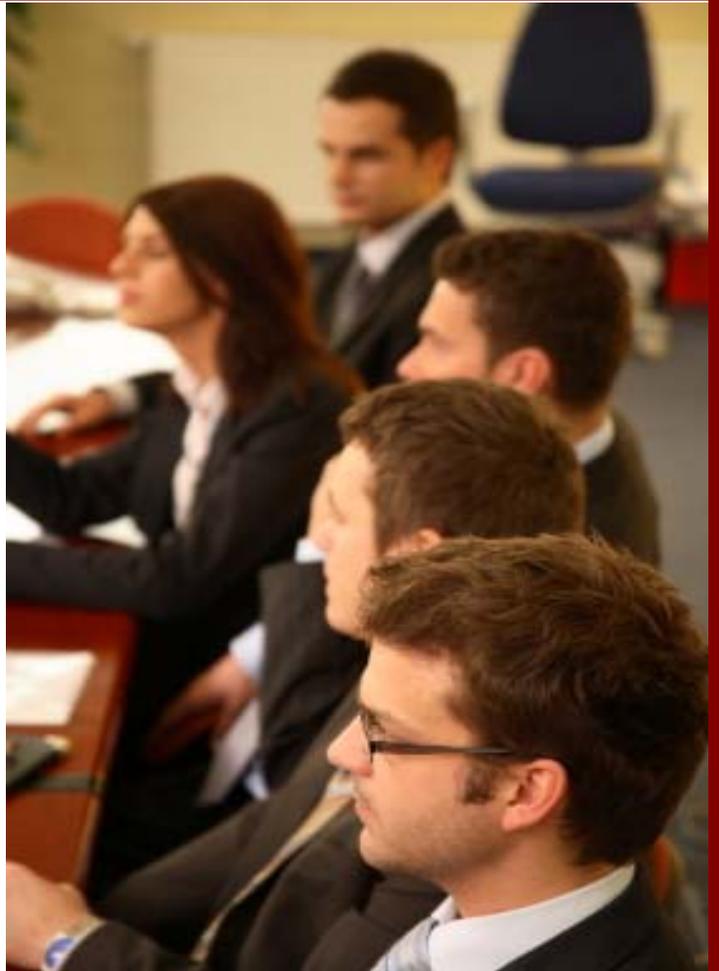
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The Professional Sales Coach

Sales meetings are a big investment for Healthcare companies who host them and the salespeople who attend. Their importance for training, communicating and building camaraderie is unparalleled. But, how well do sales meetings influence bottom line productivity and sales performance? Planning and participating in over 50 successful (and some not so successful) sales meetings each year has led me to observe several mistakes Healthcare providers make that reduce the value meetings can have on sales performance.

The agendas are distributed, the welcome comments made, lights are dimmed and the marathon of PowerPoint presentations begins. One after another, managers, supervisors and company honchos deliver company news, product/service updates and new sales plans. They pass around the handouts, answer a few questions, and turn it over to the next speaker.

Sound familiar? What's the problem? Information is delivered that goes in one ear and out the other. Have you ever felt frustrated after your best ever,



super charged meeting and everyone went back to selling the way they always did? Salespeople are naturally kinesthetic beings—they need and want to learn in a way that moves them. The monologue marathon of most sales meetings fails to engage reps. As a result, they have little effect on field performance.

Most experts agree—the optimal length for adult learners to retain a single thought or idea is seven minutes. This means that if you want salespeople to retain any idea you must deliver it in a seven minute ‘package’. In our “Presenting with POWER” training programs, we teach reps and managers how to incorporate “hot spice” into their presentations at regular intervals for maximum learning and retention. Presentations delivered at sales meetings should get reps engaged. This can be as simple as asking a question or as involved as initiating an exercise. Salespeople naturally respond and learn by doing. Build your meetings and presentations around frequent opportunities for interaction, exchange and participation. The results will

promote retention and ultimately improve performance in the field.

Another common mistake that negatively impacts what reps take back to the field is packing too much meeting or content into the time allocated. I have seen sales managers conduct training that starts at 7:00 AM and does not recess until 5:30 or 6:00 PM! This is simply too long to ask adult learners, let alone hyper active sales reps, to sit still that long and actually learn something!

Managers attempt to squeeze as much material as possible into meetings in an attempt to get more done in less time. As a result, learning for reps is like drinking water out of a fire hose. One sign is if your meeting consistently runs behind on planned agenda times. As the clock ticks by, meetings escalate into rapid fire “data dumps”. Question and answer sessions are relegated to email or when everyone has one foot out the door to catch a plane.

Overstuffed meetings cause Healthcare reps to feel overwhelmed and frustrated. As a result, they are less effective in translating information gathered at meetings into action steps to sell with.

To prioritize your key meeting objectives, start by listing the key action items you want your reps to implement. Cross check this list against your company sales goals. While planning, ask yourself how each agenda presentation will advance your sales initiatives and bottom line results.

Get creative in using meeting times and fun formats for disseminating information. We helped one client organize a pre-meeting web conference to launch a product. This freed up precious sales meeting time for hands-on demonstration and role play. This resulted in a much more productive meeting that truly focused on the areas reps needed most to sell better. We helped another company improve trade show performance by distributing a brief self-paced training program online prior to the show. Think of creative ways to reduce the “what to sell” data dump that often gobbles up the more important “how to sell” meeting time.

There are many ways you can use Healthcare sales meetings as a valuable tool to improve performance. We have prepared a complimentary *Sales Meeting*

Tool Kit for Sales Managers who want to get more out of their meetings (and their people). To obtain a copy, simply email us at Coach@AnitaSirianni.com or fax to 480-948-7705.



About the Author

Anita Sirianni, *The Professional Sales Coach*, has over 20 years of sales success in healthcare. Today she is one of the industry’s most popular consultants and sales trainers, providing customized programs for leading corporations throughout the United States. For more FREE sales tools and information visit our web site at www.AnitaSirianni.com or contact Anita at Coach@AnitaSirianni.com or 800-471-2619.