

Part Two: The First 90 Days

Are you onboarding your salespeople correctly?

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Editor's note: This is the second article in a five-part series. The first article, "Part One: Train to Outcomes," appears in the September 2021 issue of Office Technology.

First impressions are important. There is no doubt about it and there are no second chances if you mess them up. It is safe to say that, at this point, you have completed the recruiting and selection process, your team did a fantastic job selling your company to your new candidate and he (or she) has agreed to join the team. Congratulations. First impressions are now over.

This is where the rubber meets the road — where your new potential top performer gets to see behind the curtain and can determine if he made the right decision or not. You committed to training him for success. So, if the onboarding part of the process underwhelms, he will either be calling his recruiter or well on the path toward mediocrity at your dealership.

It is time to zero in on initial onboarding training for the new employee at your dealership. This is where his story begins with the highest hopes of success in the office technology industry. He will use these days to form the beliefs he has about your company culture, your products and services, and his future potential down the road. It is absolutely imperative that you get this right. But how do you know it will end up being a successful onboarding experience? In "Part Two: The First 90 Days," we will explore how to ensure the first 90 days of a new hire's experience are some he will never forget.

What outcomes do we expect after onboarding? As we learned in the last article, any training we put our salespeople through must be designed to have a transfer of skill by its completion. We train with the expectation of a particular outcome. During the process, we teach our salespeople what to do, we demonstrate how to do it ourselves and then we coach them in the field until they can do it proficiently. It all starts with having a clear understanding of what outcomes we expect from each training.



In the first 90 days on the job, what expectations do we have for our new hire? What outcomes are we looking for? Sure, we may wish for a new hire to figure the job out in a matter of days and be on the path to blow out his quota for the month, but we know that is not possible. It took us years to become consistent high performers in the field, so how can we expect that type of performance in only a few months from someone new to the job? We

have to be practical with our answer here.

In my opinion, there are four reasonable outcomes each rep should complete during his first 90 days at your dealership:

- (1) He is meeting his monthly activity standards.
- (2) He has a full funnel of prospects.
- (3) He has closed his first equipment sale.
- (4) He has closed his first MPS deal.

So, how do we train our salesperson to hit these four outcomes? From what I have experienced, there are three training objectives that must be done in the first 90 days or you will lose your investment in your salesperson. The goal should be to build a structured, repeatable, outcome-based sales training program around these objectives that can be scheduled and measured in advance. Let's break each objective down at a high level.

Objective One: Your Salesperson Believes in Your Company

Getting your new hire to believe in your company means showing him that your dealership has a proven sales process and sales support infrastructure set up that will lead him down the path of success and make sure he reaches it in the end, and that the company has his back and will not let him down. All of this boils down to company culture.

Company culture refers to the attitudes and behaviors of a company and its employees. The way an organization's people interact with each other shows the values they hold and the decisions they make. Company culture encompasses a variety

of elements, including the work environment, the company mission, the management process, core values, purpose, activity and performance expectations, goal setting, and achievement and recognition. Your culture training should include all of these elements.

A great best practice around building company culture in this industry came from the recent 2021 BTA National Conference. Chris Taylor of BTA member

dealership Fisher's Technology mapped out how he built a growing company with more than 10 locations by focusing on creating an amazing company culture. His unbelievably low turnover rate (less than 14%) proves he has created something special and shows us what is possible when you put culture first.

Finally, you can never forget that you are the poster child for your dealership's culture. Your new salesperson will be looking to you for inspiration and to see what can be possible in his career. You must lead by example here.

Objective Two: Your Salesperson Believes in Your Products & Services

Now that your new hire believes in your company, you need to build structured training to get him excited about what he will be selling and how it helps your customers. He needs to believe that what he sells is making a difference in the world. That passion should make him want to become an evangelical minister of the different offerings in your portfolio. But how do we get him to this place?

There are five areas to structure your product training around to achieve this outcome:

- (1) Understanding how the products work
- (2) Learning how the products can solve customer problems
- (3) Identifying "spotter" training for each offering
- (4) Being able to demonstrate the value of the products
- (5) Having an awareness of industry-focused case studies

The same list of five areas should be applied to each of the services you offer at your dealership. Whatever you spend your time training on, you will see your salesperson attack in the field. If you train on one product or service more than the rest, do not be surprised if your salesperson focuses on selling that product or service. He will always target what he feels most comfortable with.

A word of caution: Do not make the terrible mistake of confusing product training with "how-to-sell" training. Many dealers rely on their manufacturers to do product training for their salespeople and that is OK. It works as long as your outcomes satisfy the five areas above. Allowing your manufacturer to train your salesperson on how to

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sell will get in the way of him being able to sell other services for your dealership, like MPS, managed IT services or VoIP.

Objective Three: Your Salesperson Believes in Himself

The final objective is to train your new hire in fundamental selling skills that he can use during his entire career. With these skills, he will learn how to find prospects, get them excited about one of

your offerings, present proposals that match their criteria and close them in predictable time frames. This is what I call "how-to-sell" training. There are four parts to this type of training.

(1) Your new hire needs to learn how to get his sales message — what he says to get someone interested in meeting with him — correct. This means learning how to get a current customer open to looking into another service he does not have today. It means knowing how to relate what he sells to what the customer is having challenges with.

(2) He needs to learn to fill his sales funnel. That includes how to prospect on foot, over the phone and using cold emailing techniques, as well as how to do social selling. He needs to learn how to handle objections, plan for an effective week, manage time effectively and deal with rejection.

(3) He needs to learn how to run effective meetings that close for a next step. This includes current accounts and net-new customers. He needs to learn how to prepare for those meetings, communicate with different personality styles, build relationships and ask questions that lead to opportunities.

(4) He needs to learn to put together proposals that build value. This includes building value throughout the sales cycle and learning how to create urgency, handle the price objection, negotiate and close.

By learning how to sell with these four parts, he ultimately learns to believe in himself. He learns how to do the job. Knowing these sales skills will allow him to sell any product, service or offering you send his way.

Training the sales fundamentals takes more than just the first 90 days. It is part of the company's culture and woven into the fabric of its success. It is revisited weekly. It is practiced daily. It is coached and inspected regularly. It applies to the new hire as well as the tenured major account rep on the team. No one in the organization is above skill development and becoming a better version of himself.

Checks & Balances Along the Way

Once you start doing this, you will find it is a lot of work to manage this process. That is why it is important that it becomes a team initiative. During my tenure at Mr. Copy

(MRC), one of the ways we were able to get this done regularly was to use onboarding checklists and leveraging human resources for support.

Using an Onboarding Checklist

With all of the different steps that happen during the first 90 days, how could you not use a checklist? At MRC, we had checklists that itemized each onboarding activity, the scheduled day and time, and who owned that activity. Once it was complete, the owner signed off on it.

This checklist was not just for things the new hire had to get done — it was also for the sales manager, who was the process holder for the whole experience and made sure any new hire was at the right place at the right time. The manager had to coordinate schedules with everyone involved. On top of that, there were things just for the manager to complete on the checklist, like getting his territory aligned in the CRM, putting together his initial strategy list of accounts to attack, and taking the salesperson out to lunch on his first day on the job. The sales manager would regularly have to present the status of his new hire's onboarding checklist to senior leadership to ensure everything was on track.

Leveraging Human Resources

Our human resources (HR) team members can be incredible partners during the sales onboarding process. They are the impartial third parties and the safe places to get the truth about how the new hire's experience has been. One of the ways we worked together at MRC was through something we called "the five firsts" — the five first impressions that mattered for any new employee. The five firsts consisted of:

- (1) The first day on the job
- (2) The first sales team meeting
- (3) The first deal
- (4) The first 30 days check-in
- (5) The first 90 days check-in

The goal of the five firsts was to make sure each of these moments was special for the new hire. The first day on the job had to be one that would build excitement about the new hire's new opportunity. How were we welcoming this new hire? With gifts? With recognition and appreciation? The first team meeting had plenty of company culture inside of it. It also included time for the new salesperson to get to know the group better and feel more comfortable. The first deal was a special first, with companywide recognition and a letter that was sent home to the rep's family. Then there were scheduled check-ins with HR that

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covered questions about the new hire's onboarding experience and a review of his checklist. With HR involved, we got candid feedback to see how we could improve the whole experience.

Summary of the First 90 Days

We need to separate recruiting, interviewing and selection from onboarding. When a candidate agrees to join your team, you must have a plan for how you

will show him he made the right decision. You hired him for attitude. It is time to train him on the skills he needs for success. That is your commitment.

If you do this right, you should expect to see his funnel filling up within the first three months. You should expect to see him comfortably meeting activity expectations, as well as getting one equipment deal and one MPS deal under his belt. The key is doing it right.

You must design your onboarding program around the three training objectives I have outlined in this article if you want to successfully bring in a new candidate and set him up for success. This is a major task for any organization to accomplish. That is why you need checks and balances to make sure it is fresh and constantly improving. You need onboarding checklists and to leverage your HR team with the five firsts. After all, you need to protect and grow your investment.

In the next article, part three of five, I will continue with product training. I will go in-depth on what I recommend you include in the product and services training portion of the onboarding process. Doing it right means your new hire will believe in what he sells and how what he sells matters to businesses in his territory. ■

Derek Shebby, founder of Modern Sales Training, spent 17 years as a top sales executive and sales director with Xerox Corp. in California. During his tenure at Mr. Copy (MRC), he was a 13-time Sales President's Club Award winner, coached hundreds of salespeople and sales leaders to excellence, and helped grow his local division from \$40 million to more than \$100 million in annual revenue (30 to 500 employees). Now he spends his time raising his three boys in San Diego, California, while helping dealerships across the nation increase revenues and profits through his copier/MFP sales training program, online sales courses and workshops. He can be reached at derek@modernsalestraining.com and has exclusive sales trainings for BTA members at www.modernsalestraining.com/BTA. Visit www.modernsalestraining.com.

