
FORMALIZING THE INFORMAL LEARNING PROCESS

How one model of
collaboration can
refill the leaking Learner.

Jeff Thrutchley

This Sounds Familiar, Doesn't it?

*“I am the VP of Sales, responsible for the revenue and sales goals of several locations with sales managers to support the reps in the field. I know HR hired **qualified** individuals, and the Training team ensured they **demonstrated** their ability to sell successfully in the **classroom**. Now they are in their locations and out in the field, and I am left with the questions: Why aren't they performing to standard? **What went wrong?**”*

Regardless of how well-equipped each sales representative appears to be after they leave a training session, without a systematic method to reinforce the learned key skills while **ON** the job, they forget *how* and *why* to apply their new skills, or simply find it easier to go back to *the way they've always done it*. Their new learning gets crowded out by the daily onslaught of **new information**, and over time, consistent application and execution of the newly learned skills moves to the bottom of their 'to-do' list, in other words, people leak.

....in other words, people leak!

Because of this dilemma, sales VPs across the country want to know: With all of these variables: time constraints, competing agendas, and differing leadership skills and styles, how can I expect my sales managers to **leverage** the training their representatives received and impact a long-term change in their team's behavior? What **proven** tools exist for their support?

Informal Learning

We are always learning, always processing, picking up new information or even validating the information we already have. When we collaborate, team-up or even chat at the water cooler, we are constantly exchanging information. A note on Twitter, a blurb on Facebook, or a quick blog all add up to our collective **informal** knowledge base.

“Informal learning accounts for over **75%** of the learning taking place in an organization today” – aglesslearner.com

“ **80%** of all corporate learning takes place through on-the-job interactions with peers, experts and managers” – 2008 Bersin & Associates study of more than 800 HR professionals.

The manager who can effectively capture *their* share of the **75-80%** of informal learning that takes place, and concentrate it on impactful sales meetings and supportive learning, will more likely affect a genuine behavior change.

In the next three pages we will explore key questions and challenges facing sales leaders and introduce a unique solution guaranteed to drive results.

Effectively **FORMALIZING** “*informal learning*”, systematically provides the necessary field support to change behavior, drive results and provide consistent feedback for sales teams.



Trends – Informal Training

Addressing the inherent challenges of managing a multi-generational workforce, from the Randstad USA World of Work 2008:

“INSPIRING OPTIMUM PERFORMANCE FROM THESE WORKERS ARE PRIMARY CHALLENGES FOR MANAGERS....

THE BOTTOM LINE IS TEAMWORK - AND AN ATMOSPHERE FOCUSED ON COMPANY GOALS THAT WORKERS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO AND ACHIEVE TOGETHER.

THEY CAN VALUE AND UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.

THEY WORK, LEARN, SHARE, DISCOVER, INNOVATE AND PROSPER TOGETHER.”

 randstad

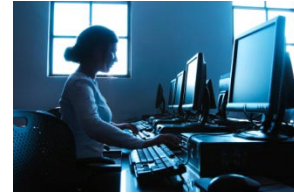
The current trend in informal training leans toward computer based, self-paced courses, blogs and chat rooms. This approach lacks **synergy** and therefore fails on several levels:

No Opportunity for:

Individuals to verbally process

Team discussion and collaboration

Demonstration of skills



We agree that knowledge is *power*, but the knowledge of **successful** selling skills and techniques is not effective unless it is **coupled** with advanced interpersonal skills. And it is those interpersonal skills that can not be taught or reinforced by the trendy atmosphere of online or independent-study methods.

The Problem – Learner Retention

Training programs ensure knowledge is transferred, however, they do not ensure that it is retained. The retention solution lies in understanding *how* we learn.



We learned our ABCs, multiplication tables and state capitals through **repetition, reinforcement, practice** and **feedback**. And what is missing from most sales training is just that: adequate repetition, reinforcement, feedback and coaching back on the job. As young learners we also

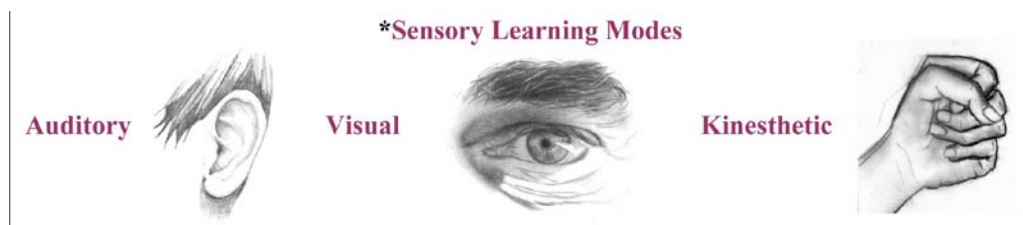


used flashcards, spelling bees, math races and pop quizzes; all based on repetition and executable skills in a collaborative environment.

Repetition is the one thing that can break through the constant buzz and hum of nonstop incoming information. Ironically, most so-called “effective” training sessions far too often cover more information than can be adequately assimilated and executed back on the job.

The problem is compounded by:

- **Inadequate** instructional design
- Lecture-based initial **training**
- Only the **occasional** role-play by one or two participants
- Too much information with too little **interaction**



The Pay-Off to Finding a Solution

Expanding on Pareto's Principle (the 80/20 Rule) – if you have 100 locations, your top 20 managers would be successful regardless of the support you gave them. Point them toward the goal and they will find a way to achieve it. In the reverse, 20 managers would probably never succeed regardless of the support you offer. Most importantly, **60 managers would be successful if given the proper tools to achieve the desired results.**

While the top 20 will maximize the use of better tools, moving the bar for 60% of your managers and their teams would dramatically increase your bottom line.

That is a **BIG** pay-off....*provided* they have the proper tools!

Defining the Proper Tools

When searching for effective sales training tools, what characteristics should they include?

They should be:

Practical – With limited time, the tools need to be easy for the manager to execute.

Understandable - A picture is worth a thousand words. A DVD video will model the skill illustrating 'what good looks like'.

Personally Involving – People don't learn just by watching a video screen. They learn best by doing, with discussion and application tools that make for a lively and collaborative team meeting.

Multi-sensory – We learn in different ways: Auditory, Visually or Kinesthetically. Therefore, the training should touch each mode and each learner with *every* module.

Individualized – We learn at different rates. Job aids such as audio reinforcement CDs and pocket-wallet cards allow each learner to review the material as often as necessary.

Accountable – About two weeks after a team meeting, a follow-up session is conducted to confirm what the Reps have retained, what is their change in behavior, and what are their results.

Consistent – Using a skill-building model each month, sales teams can focus on continuous improvement resulting in tangible results which are often demonstrated after the very first session.

The **Pareto Principle**, also known as the 80-20 Rule, states: For many events, 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. Business-management thinker, Joseph M Juran, devised the principle and named it after Italian economist Wilfredo Pareto.

It is a common rule in business: e.g., "80% of your sales comes from 20% of your sales team"



Wilfredo Frederico Damaso Pareto

Juran is widely credited for adding the human dimension to quality management. He pushed for the education and training of managers. For Juran, human relations problems were the ones to isolate. Resistance to change-or in his terms, cultural resistance-was the root cause of quality issues. He moved for technical change, illuminating the core problem in reforming business quality. He wrote **Managerial Breakthrough**, which was published in 1964, outlining the issue.

Equip Your Sales Team for Peak Performance

The Sales Meeting Supplement is a cost-effective, easy-to-facilitate, multi-media training tool. This system helps sales managers and meeting facilitators **teach** and **reinforce** targeted skill sets in a regularly-scheduled meeting format.

Each module **includes**:

- ◇ Audio and written components for the meeting facilitator (to be ready in 15 minutes)
- ◇ A short DVD video to model the skill
- ◇ Written handouts for each participant to discuss and explore together
- ◇ Group exercises to discuss and explore skill application
- ◇ An audio CD or MP3 for each attendee to keep for skill reinforcement
- ◇ Retention Review Quiz for accountability and follow up
- ◇ Skill-specific Wallet Reminder Cards

Additionally, a Customer Service Account Manager is assigned to every field manager/facilitator to:

- ◇ Coach for optimal effectiveness
- ◇ Ensure consistent utilization
- ◇ Track sales successes
- ◇ Report successes and non-compliance to the Sales VP



The Big Picture

For 20 years, Summit Learning Systems has been equipping sales teams for peak performance with their unique and proven meeting-in-a-box, *The Sales Meeting Supplement*. When you join the growing list of leading corporations that use *The Sales Meeting Supplement*, you and your organization will gain:



- ◇ Clearly communicated expectations
- ◇ Supportive environment
- ◇ Required tools and resources
- ◇ Appropriate motivation
- ◇ Necessary competencies

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Our Guarantee

With **The Sales Meeting Supplement**, you provide your team with quality sales training and support for an entire year. Through consistent training and increased motivation of your sales team, **sales results are guaranteed or your money back.**

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