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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Douglas Fry

5701 E. Circle Dr. - #347
Cicero, NY 13039-8638
Office: 877-203-2327

Email: Loren@communitypublishers.com
Douglas@communitypublishers.com
Cassey@communitypublishers.com

MARKETING REPRESENTATIVES
Wendy MacDonald
Kristi Dale

3105 Camino Del Arco
Carlsbad, CA 92009
Office: 913-461-3721
Email: Wendy@plan4growth.com
Email: Kristi@plan4growth.com

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION
Design2Pro
www.design2pro.com

Howard Barbanel
516-860-7440
Email: howard@design2pro.com

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COMING NEXT MONTH

The April *Publish* plan is to take a look into the upcoming trade show and it's solution providing participants. As always, we will also cover the people, information and issues that are influencing the community publishing industry.

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PRESIDENT
Manuel Karam
Genesee Valley Publications
 1471 Route 15
 Avon, NY 14414
 ManuelKaram@gvpennysaver.com
 585-226-8111



PAST PRESIDENT
John Draper
The Free Star
 P. O. Box 277
 Pipestone, MN 56164
 jdraper@pipestonestar.com
 507-825-3333



Carol Toomey
Action Unlimited
 100-1 Domino Drive
 Concord, MA 01742
 carolaction@aol.com
 978-371-2442



FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
Joyce Frericks
Star Publications
 522 Sinclair Lewis Avenue
 Sauk Centre, MN 56378
 joyce@saukherald.com
 320-352-6577

AT-LARGE DIRECTORS



Shane Goodman
Cityview
 8101 Birchwood Court, Suite D
 Johnston, IA 50131
 shane@dmcityview.com
 515-953-4822



Rick Wamre
Advocate Community Newspapers
 6301 Gaston Avenue
 Dallas, TX 75214
 rwamre@advocatemag.com
 214-560-4212



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Lisa Miller
New Century Press
 P. O. Box 28
 Rock Rapids, Iowa 51246
 lmiller@ncppub.com
 712-472-2525



Joe Nicastro
New View Media Group
 5 Dancer Dr.
 Budd Lake, NJ 07828
 joe@mylifepublications.com
 973-809-4784



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Douglas Fry
 ACP
 104 Westland Drive
 Columbia, TN 38401
 Douglas@communitypublishers.com
 877-203-2327



SECRETARY
Farris Robinson
Clay Today
 3513 U.S. Hwy 17
 Fleming Island, FL 32003
 Farris@claytodayonline.com
 904-264-3200



Barb Perry
Reminder Publishing, LLC
 280 North Main Street
 East Longmeadow, MA 01028
 bperry@reminderpublications.com
 413-525-6661



Cassey Recore
 ACP
 5701 E. Circle Dr. - #347
 Cicero, NY 13039
 Cassey@communitypublishers.com
 877-203-2327



TREASURER
Greg Birkett
Dubuque Advertiser
 2966 JFK Road
 Dubuque, IA 52002
 gbirkett@dubuqueadvertiser.com
 563-588-0162



Jane Quairol
Kapp Advertising
 P.O. Box 840
 Lebanon, PA 17042
 janeq@themerchandiser.com
 717-273-8127



Loren Colburn
 ACP
 5701 E. Circle Dr. - #347
 Cicero, NY 13039
 Loren@communitypublishers.com
 877-203-2327

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All proceeds from the silent auction go to the Bill Welsh Foundation to help provide scholarships for Rising Stars to attend the ACP annual conference.

HIRE...TRAIN... RETAIN...AND CHANGE



BY MANUEL KARAM

Of all the jobs at a community publishing company, which is the most challenging to hire, train and retain? In my experience the answer is without a doubt – sales. There simply aren't many other jobs that prepare a new hire for the speed of our sales cycles, the objections they'll encounter, or the expertise needed to recommend good marketing plans confidently to business owners.

When I started as a sales manager, I remember being excited whenever we brought a new person on board. I would think "great, the position is filled now I can get back to normal day-to-day stuff." Unfortunately, many times I ended up disappointed that the new hire did not stay very long. After doing the same things that produced the same results for a period of time, it became apparent there was more that needed to be done to set our new team members up for success.

First, we were handing over sales territories too quickly. After a road day or two with the manager the rep would in some cases have 500 accounts to work, sometimes from a satellite office with little manager supervision. That was too much too soon. Currently, we require new hires to start as sales assistants, helping the rest of the team for at least two or three months before they're assigned a territory. We stick to that even if a territory is open. That ensures the new hire understands our system, our expectations and our customers before we hand the keys over. We also have them go on road days with all of our reps one at a time, so they can get a taste for the "real world" and some differing presentation styles. Lastly, we have them go through online

training through ACP. Whether that's TLI or Power Sales University, we find it essential that the new hire take their time to learn in a controlled setting before the action starts. These things have all made a huge difference to our retention numbers. I imagine you have considered these strategies at one time or another at your own publications and established similar guidelines.

The other thing we had to redevelop, and perhaps this was just as important, is what success looked like for a new rep. In our market, three of the four counties we cover are rural and relatively stable in terms of local business ownership. The other county around the city of Rochester underwent rapid changes over a few short years and it's where much of our employee (sales) turnover was occurring. Local businesses around Rochester were being challenged by ecommerce and fierce competition from corporate chains at a much higher rate than our rural communities. The local businesses there had to evolve. We couldn't have a new sales rep returning to the same customers offering the same things and expecting a different outcome. We had to change ourselves. That meant expanding our portfolio of media products to include niche guides, glossy magazines, digital solutions, as well as adjusting the circulation of our core penny saver to match demand.

My point is it's worth having a good plan for training and retaining. But it's also just as important that we're all making sure our publications are evolving with the local business landscape. It's a heck of a lot easier for a salesperson to stay when they believe they have a winning formula behind them. ■

REAL WORLD TRAINING



BY DOUGLAS FRY

You have probably seen photos of mountain climbers atop Mount Everest with their ice axes raised over their heads in triumph as they straddle the summit of the tallest mountain in the world. I grew up idolizing those climbers in the photos. In fact, as a young man I met Jim Whittaker, the first American to climb Mount Everest. I had a photo of him on my wall with his ice ax raised above his head and his other arm around his Sherpa guide Nawang Gombu. This photo motivated me to climb mountains.

Jim Whittaker, or “Mr. Whittaker” as I liked to call him, and his twin brother Lou learned climbing techniques as they climbed nearly every high point around Seattle. One other little aside, Jim became the CEO of REI (Recreational Equipment Incorporated) starting his career as its only employee at the beginning of that company. You probably have an REI nearby. But I’m getting off the subject here. The subject is about ice axes and training.

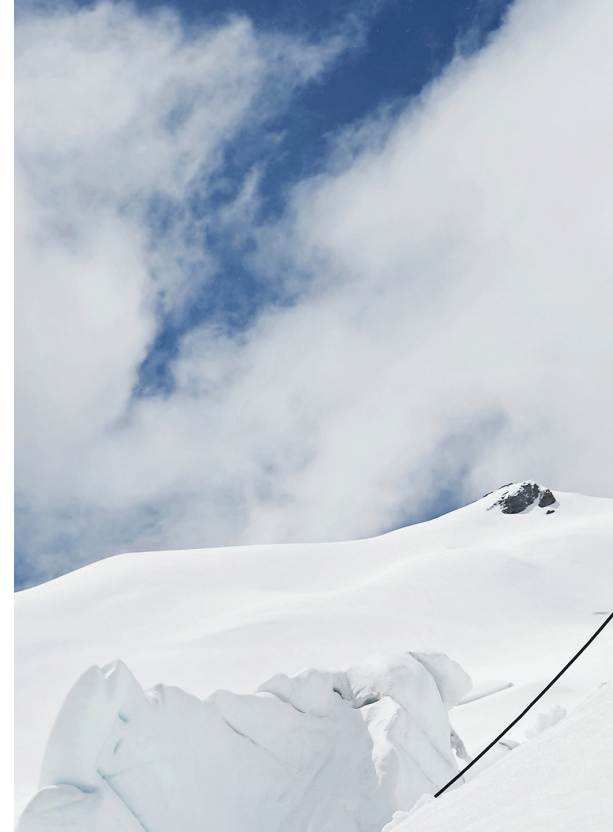
The lure of adventure attracted me to the mountains constantly. On April 27, 1973 I was to lead a group of first time climbers with the goal of sum-

miting Mount Ellinor in the Olympic Mountains. Yep, that’s the way they spelled Ellinor back then.

In preparation for the event I invited all the climbers that would be in the expedition to a nearby park to practice some of the techniques needed to climb in the ice and snow of the proposed route. We practiced “roping up” which means attaching a climbing rope to a harness around your waist and legs. Two or sometimes three people would be spaced along that 120’ rope. The reality was that simply walking tied together had to be practiced. If one person climbed too slowly or too quickly the others on the rope might be pulled off balance. So, we learned to move as a team. **Lesson 1: train to move together as a team.**

Having conquered the task of walking we moved on to another technique: the belay. When a rope team gets to more dangerous sections of a route the first person climbs until reaching the end of the rope then next person climbs past, leap frogging ahead. They switch leads to climb the tough sections. While one person is climbing the other person attaches themselves to a rock or other immovable object and lets out the rope as the first person ascends. If the person in the lead falls the second person stops the rope from moving and keeps the leader from going “splat.” **Lesson 2: train to improve your chances of success.**

With no rocks to attach to, such as the ice and snow of Mount Ellinor, the second person on the rope team assumes the “Boot/Ax Belay.” The second person on the rope would normally jam their ice ax into the snow or ice all the way to the head of the ax. Then they would place their foot against the ax shaft to ensure



it didn’t get pulled out of the ice. Finally, the rope was wound around the head of the ice ax to offer friction in case of a fall. If the leader fell the second person would simply stop the rope to arrest their descent. Sounds easy, right? **Lesson 3: practice techniques new to you.**

We practiced the Boot/Ax Belay until I felt that everyone was proficient in the operation. Understanding and being able to perform this belay was extremely important because the lives of the leader and everyone attached to the rope were in mortal danger if anything went wrong.

The day of the climb finally arrived. We drove to the base of the mountain and climbed up into the clouds. After about 2 hours of climbing we found ourselves in a “white out.” The fog had enveloped us, thick and opaque. White clouds and white snow blended into a morass so thick that we couldn’t tell up from down. It was quite a unique experience. We stopped climbing and made sure everyone was roped up as they should be. I figured we were close to the top of a ravine, nearing the ridge that would lead us to the summit.

The problem was I couldn’t see anything other than white. Now more than ever I needed my rope team to be alert and at their best, our lives depended on it. The others on the rope began setting up a boot/



THE ONE THING

was and make sure I wasn't walking out into space. After a few minutes I neared the end of the rope; stabbed the ice ax into the snow, removed it, and looked through the hole it left to see the valley 2,000 feet below. I had climbed out onto a snow cornice that could have given way at any moment. I gingerly edged back from the precipice and returned to my team.

When I looked at the team that would save my life if needed, I saw that one person was simply sitting in the snow, the other had the rope wrapped around his ankle instead of the ice ax. If I had fallen the middle person would have been pulled away and the last person would have been yanked off his feet with the rope hauling him away by the ankle. **Lesson #4: even if you think you know the technique you still need to practice often.**

I'm happy to say we made it to the summit of Mount Ellinor. The feeling of accomplishment was overcome by the realization that my training had come up short. I never took training for granted again. In order to execute when it counts you have to be able to count on your team.

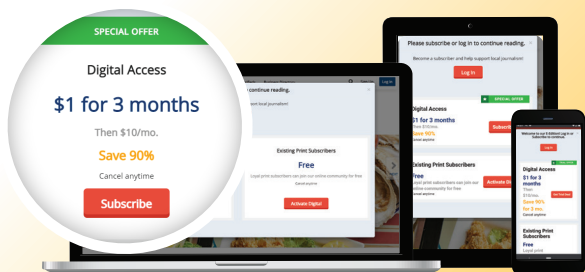
That brings us to training for our jobs, specifically sales. Training with Power Sales University may not save your life but it can make your sales life more enjoyable. Don't take it for granted. Don't assume your team knows what they are doing and how to execute in a professional manner. You need to drill, practice, and role play in order to make sure success becomes a matter of rote rather than a matter of rarity. The best part of the PSU training system is that there is no extra cost to you.

Lesson #5: don't wait another minute to train as though your success depends on it, because it does.

ax belay and after they yelled "Belay On!" I knew I could move ahead. I climbed cautiously toward what I thought might be the ridge. I poked my ice ax into the snow every foot or two to test how deep the snow

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E-Newsletters:	37,559	Other:	80,889
	118,148*		

5. Audited Circulation, Distribution and Net Press Averages - Print Edition	
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Average Gross Distribution	14,292
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OUR DATA SPEAKS VOLUMES



BY LOREN COLBURN

I'm not sure why my blood pressure rises when I hear the term "role-playing" mentioned in a sales training context. I feel like Pavlov's dog with drool on my face as this unconditioned response reacts to the simple sound of those two words connected by a hyphen! Why do salespeople all cringe when the term "role-playing" is introduced into a training session?

We could substitute "rehearsal", or "practice", or even "walk-through" (if we need the hyphen) in place of role-playing, but my fear would be extending this anxiety reaction to even more words. What is there about practicing sales scenarios that seems so unnatural to us, so uncomfortable?

We accept practice in almost every other aspect of our lives without any concern. For many of those areas, we actually welcome the opportunity to practice in the hope that whatever skill we are working on will improve our performance when we need it. Learning to play a piano, swing a golf club, parallel park your car, swim, cook a new recipe, or even add a new dance step all require consistent rehearsal to get the familiarity with any of these functions to perform at the best level.

Why does practicing real sales situations conjure up such anxiety in salespeople? All too often I believe we perceive it to be some type of public speaking activity which carries a similar reaction with most people. The only way you overcome the fear of public speaking, is to speak publicly to a group of people on several occasions, each time you will get even more at ease. The other critical aspect of easing the anxiety of public speaking, is to be both very familiar and very passionate about your topic.

It is also very similar to the anxiety many salespeople feel when making a cold call. How do I start the conversation? What if they object right away? What if they put me off rather than talk to me? The only way you overcome the uncomfortable feeling related to a cold call – is to practice your responses in those situations until that response is automatic, comfortable and totally natural. But that level of comfort only comes with practice, practice, practice.

Through the sales rehearsal process, you can prepare to present responses and questions you know you will need in advance for specific sales situations and then practice delivering them until they are as natural as saying "good morning!" That's what "role-playing" is for and why it is critical to maximizing your true potential as a salesper-



son. It's like telling a good joke, you have to deliver it not like you were reading it but like a story that you recall the details of all the way to the punch line. The more you tell it, the more comfortable you get to provide the timing and details to get the best audience response.

One of this month's feature articles lays out some great exercises to build role-playing into your skill development plan. It covers 8 different exercises that help develop needed skills that range from listening all the way to utilizing people within your organization to play the role that most closely fits their normal persona. These exercises will add some specific focuses to the sales training and help your team get comfortable with role-playing on an ongoing basis.

Once the comfort level pushes the anxiety out of the activity, you can utilize it to address new objections or unique sales situations as they present themselves.

The familiarity of your product and the passion for finding an opportunity to discuss that product will improve the more you practice as well. Relaxed and comfortable is the best posture to illustrate the confidence and professionalism that advertisers will need to see in order to believe in what you are saying. The more prepared you feel in each situation, the better you will react in responding with an appropriate and problem-solving reply.

Like any professional, salespeople need the practice / rehearsal / role-playing repetitions to be ongoing and relevant for it to have a lasting improvement on performance. Regardless of if it is sinking a free throw, making a shot from a greenside bunker, playing happy birthday on a harmonica or answering the nobody reads your paper objection – proper rehearsal leads to improved performance. Improved performance leads to more media buyers agreeing with you, "If it's free, buy it!" ■



CONFERENCE OPENING KEYNOTE

EVERY SALES YES BEGINS WITH A KNOW WITH SAM RICHTER

INTEL SECRETS TO FIND THE RIGHT PERSON, AT THE RIGHT TIME, WITH THE RIGHT MESSAGE



In today's world, it's no longer enough to be interesting. To succeed in sales, you must be interested. What's important to the other person? How can you hyper-personalize your message so it gets noticed? When you know more, you'll find the right opportunities, at the right time, with the right message to get meetings with decision makers that others only dream about. In this dynamic program, you will discover...

- A mathematically proven formula for revenue growth that reveals your best prospect companies, decision makers, contact information, and ways to connect that generates positive responses.
- Jaw-dropping tactics for finding online information that 99%

never thought possible, using the tools you already use every day (and some new ones you never knew existed - all free!).

- Techniques to identify opportunities using sales trigger events and powerful introductions, so you're calling on prospects who most likely need your product or solution, right now.

How to leverage information and put the "R" back into CRM to get past gatekeepers, make a great impression, and gain permission to ask challenging questions.

Attendees will receive custom Intel Resources making it easy to implement what was learned when you get home. You will be shocked at what you don't know (but soon will) that you will immediately use to dramatically improve sales performance.

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP SESSION

"GET THE MEETING WORKSHOP" WITH SAM RICHTER

EVEN MORE WEB SEARCH SECRETS FOR FINDING SALES OPPORTUNITIES AND GETTING MEETINGS WITH DECISION MAKERS

In the keynote, you learned sales intelligence strategies and tactics to find more opportunities and get meetings with decision makers most never dreamed possible. In this perfect workshop complement, you'll discover best practices for advanced intel gathering and communication including...

- ✓ **ADVANCED WEB SEARCH SECRETS** (that most pros don't even know) for finding existing lead lists, membership directories, competitor proposals, price lists, past and current RFPs, and more.
- ✓ **BEST PRACTICE TECHNIQUES FOR LEVERAGING INFORMATION AND EFFECTIVE PROSPECTING** via email, social media / LinkedIn, and live sales calls (includes the best-practice script library).
- ✓ **INTEL TACTICS AND RESOURCES THAT REVEAL HIDDEN INFORMATION** - in legal and ethical ways - that help you discover more opportunities and ways to increase your credibility and value.
- ✓ **WAYS TO USE THE CUSTOM INTEL RESOURCES** that all attendees receive to find the right prospects, at the right time, and ensure relevancy in every sales call (taught through a live, interactive demo).

When you know more about your prospects and clients, their issues, their goals, their industries, and their (and your) competitors, you gain the edge in every sales call, every meeting, every proposal, and every negotiation - every time.

LEADERSHIP SESSION

GET IN TO THE DIGITAL RACE WITH CHARITY HUFF



Charity Huff is CEO of January Spring, a digital marketing & advertising agency that works exclusively with Niche publishers. Charity has designed and delivered multi-media sales programs, working alongside 5,000+ sales professionals from the media and tech industries over her 25+ year career. She and her team have built a proven model to enhance your offering to include off-site digital using a combination of geo-fencing, device targeting, household targeting, paid social, and search marketing.

Seven out of every \$10 spent in local advertising will be spent in digital this year. Charity Huff, CEO of digital ad agency January Spring and partner with ACP, will provide proven, go-to-market strategies that include the right combination of your own print and digital paired with “the rest of the internet.” Leave this session revved up to take these offerings back to your team. New revenue is within reach.

LEADERSHIP SESSION

10 STEPS TO DIGITAL SUCESSS WITH DAN BUENDO

REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE IN BUILDING A DIGITAL MARKETING BUSINESS FROM AN EXISTING PRINT BUSINESS.



Way back in 2003 Dan Buendo started offering web design services to local newspaper advertisers under the Reminder Web Design name, an extension of their newspaper company, Reminder Publications. Eventually, this digital division of the newspaper grew to become its own separate company, Envision Marketing Group (EMG), a full service marketing and advertising agency, launched in 2010, specializing in branding, weab design, SEO, social media, video production, email marketing, media placement and a whole lot more. Today, EMG continues to grow its client base, working with hundreds of small, medium & large business throughout New England and across the country.

Dan’s session will cover ten of the most important steps publications can take to build their digital business. He will address your questions, fears and concerns having walked the same path you are faced with in your markets. Hearing about digital from an experienced print professional should deliver a perspective and experience level that will give sound, relevant and insightful information to assure participants they get the guidance and information they need to build their digital business.

LEADERSHIP SESSION

BE THE COMMUNITY FORUM WITH TOM SILVESTRI



Learn about a transformative strategy to redefine your future as THE Community Forum, becoming super-relevant to a growing audience while meeting crucial demand for civil discourse. In its simplest form, the initiative uses the Forum or town hall formats to better advocate the mission of your organization, deepen the news literacy of your community, and organize civil conversations about community issues of importance while identifying game-changing solutions that improve the quality of life and the success of your operation. Above all, the ultimate goal is to be the catalyst for an enlightend democracy, thanks to your organization’s intense connections to the community it serves and your inspiring leadership. Learn from the organizer of the Public Square that blazed a new course for civil discourse in Richmond, VA, over a 15-year period that delivered nearly 80 programs. The Community Forum has been an initiative of The Relevance Project, an initiative of press associations in the U.S. and Canada.

Tom Silvestri has spent nearly 45 years in the newspaper industry including roles as a frontline news manager and editor, jobs with dailies and weeklies while launching monthlies, unprecedented corporate roles such as the director of news synergy and community newspapers president, several community and industry leadership positions, and the establishment of a civil, civic dialogue initiative called the Public Square that earned The Times-Dispatch national acclaim. Tom’s industry experience has also included being chairman of the American Press Institute and president of the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association, where he received the Frank W. Mayborn Leadership Award in 2018. He also is a member of the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame.

LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE

BRING A QUESTION TO SHARE - This session will be a thought provoking open mic roundtable that will be sure to get your engines and engagement fired up! This is your chance to make sure your questions, concerns, or topics of interest are discussed.



8 SALES ROLE PLAY EXERCISES TO PREPARE YOUR TEAM FOR THE WIN

BY ADAM CLARK

Here's how most sales role-play exercises go:

- The manager gathers the team and exclaims (with just a bit too much excitement) the plan to do some role-playing.
- The first exercise covers the most obvious objections that everybody already knows how to handle.
- The second exercise is too fake to learn from. The third is worse.
- What follows is a poorly structured, incredibly awkward, and minimally effective goof-off session.

Role-play exercises are crucial to developing strong conversational tactics and messaging delivery. It's mind-blowing how little attention is paid to doing them right.

Medals are given out at the championship, but you earn them in practice. It's time to take role-play seriously.

I have participated in and run thousands of role-play exercises for sales. Here are the 8 exercises I have found most effective, and tips to execute them right.

EXERCISE #1 — LEARNING IS LISTENING

Before we can help anyone on the other end of our sales efforts, we must become expert listeners. That's why this exercise needs to be repeated regularly!

It can be performed in a large group, or with as few as 2 people. If in a group, either segment into smaller groups, or play with the whole group, "telephone" style.

1. One person will begin by making a statement. It can be directly related to your organization or something entirely abstract.

2. The next person in line will begin their statement using the last three words of the previous person's statement.
3. Continue until you have circled the entire group, or for a specified period of time.

This improv comedy technique will help reps learn to pay attention to what others are saying, instead of living within their own agendas and planned responses.

EXERCISE #2 — OBJECTION ISLAND

This is a great role-play exercise to run anytime your team is together. It not only provides a great field for practicing rapid fire objection response, but allows team members to hear ideas, engage in peer coaching, and shake off some nerves through a shared experience.

Here's how it works:

1. Begin by calling out a rep, then hurling a common objection heard during your team's calls.
2. The rep has 5 seconds to respond, and do so in a way that will allow the conversation to progress positively, or they are voted off Objection Island.
3. If the rep is successful, the rep then calls out a person of their choice and repeats the process.

Each time, the objection and response must be unique. Typically the sales leader is the final judgment for timing, response quality, and originality versus other responses.

If you want to vary things a bit, the sales leader can throw out the same objection to every team member sequentially, following the same response guidelines.

EXERCISE #3 — PERSONA MIXED BAG

This role-play exercise helps a rep sharpen many tools at once — in particular, the ability to interact successfully with the many personas they'll work with within your target organizations.

Begin this exercise with a list of personas typically targeted and encountered. Examples of these can be CXO, Director of X, or gatekeeper. Additionally, you can get creative by adding personality traits such as "super direct," "in a hurry," "analytical," or "distracted."

1. Write each one down on a small sheet of paper, fold, and place into a bowl or hat.
2. At the beginning of the role-play (once the goal of the session is defined), the person playing the prospect will draw a piece of paper from the hat and adopt the qualities written on it.
3. Now perform the role-play, provide the feedback, and start from the top.
4. After at least 2 passes with that persona and/or trait, grab a new one.

Keep in mind, the goal and tactics for the rep should largely remain the same, save for any tweaks from feedback.

EXERCISE #4 — EXTREME CONDITIONS (HOT SEAT)

This exercise isn't for the faint of heart and should definitely be reserved for those strong teams that can handle a bit of heat. It will add an edge of difficulty that (hopefully) won't exist in real-world calling.

The idea is exactly the same as warming up before an inning at bat: A batter will swing a weighted bat

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before stepping up to the plate. Once they drop the weighted bat and pick up the normal one, it feels incredibly light and can be moved through the swing plane at an incredible rate.

1. To begin, the sales leader will outline the rules.
2. Pitches must be perfect. Any deviation to the ideal will result in a “buzzer” or “gong” sounding, and the rep will be moved to the back of the line.
3. If the rep nails it, the role-play continues, leading to objections and other opportunities for the rep to get it just right or get out of the hot seat.
4. This can continue for many cycles if the sales leader really wants to turn the heat up.

A variation on this is to require the next rep in line to pick up exactly where the last rep left off.

EXERCISE #5 — ROLE REVERSAL

This should be an obvious one: Turn the role-play around for the rep, allowing them to assume the position of the prospect.

1. The sales leader conducts the ideal role-play, objection responses, conversational tactics, and closing techniques.
2. Allow the rep to provide feedback, or comment on what they thought worked well or not at all.
3. After a round or two, compile the items that worked well and switch seats again.
4. Using the list of winning tactics, help the rep develop their own comfort level with them. Work on wordsmithing and delivery until the rep has a strong grasp of the skills.

This also works very well with top sellers demonstrating as the sales leader would.

EXERCISE #6 — BOARDROOM BRAWL

This is another exercise best left to culturally strong, performance-oriented teams.

1. Gather the team in your boardroom. Come prepared with some recorded calls that could have gone better. Make sure you have at least one for all reps present so the field is level, and they all experience this together.
2. If you have a large team, break them up into manageable chunks, letting everyone know that their time will come.
3. Now, play the call for all to hear.
4. Once it is over, immediately adopt the persona from the prospect on the exposed call (make sure you have studied the call, and prepared a transcript to work from).
5. Have the rep begin a role-play based on the exact scenario just played for the team. The goal here is to help the rep correct their own mistakes. It gives them a mulligan of sorts and also applies a bit of pressure as the entire team is witnessing the process.

Variations:

- Encourage peer coaching during these brawls, and even to add a competitive twist by rewarding points and prizes to reps who can successfully correct the call.
- Have a different rep take over after the call is played and handle it in their way.

***NOTE:** A great side effect of “Boardroom Brawl” and “Extreme Conditions (Hot Seat)” is the softening of Ego that can wreck a salesperson’s ability to improve their skills and natural talents.*

EXERCISE #7 — THE RINGER

It is one thing to act out a persona during a role-play. It’s an entirely different thing to seek out the exact persona within your organization and invite them to participate.

If your team targets C-Level prospects regularly, go grab your C-Suite (they probably aren’t very busy anyway...) and bring them into your sales training!

- Have them simply be who they are and treat your sales team as

they would the numerous salespeople who are attempting to connect with them every single day.

- Solicit their feedback on the tactics and have them detail what is important to them with respect to their position, demands, goals, and motivators.

If you can draw on this wealth of experience and knowledge within your own organization, you can bet it will pay dividends as you target these folks in other orgs.

Yes, everyone is different. But never forget the Normal Curve. The majority of C-Level executives face similar challenges and demands, have similar thought processes and certainly similar motivators. There are always outliers, but you’ll be far better prepared if you focus your improvement efforts on the majority.

EXERCISE #8 — PAY THE PROS

Anytime a leader has to consider implementing a new idea, they come to the “build vs. buy” conundrum. If you are at this crossroad and tend to follow the “buy” approach, reach out to the guys over at Roleplay.co.

At Roleplay’s “sales gym,” your team can participate in real-world-based sales role-play training led by industry experts and receive feedback from the best in the game today. They can also help you build out your own programs to maximize your time and effort spent training your teams.

TIPS FOR BETTER SALES ROLE PLAY

SET A PRACTICE SCHEDULE

Proper sales practice is not a once-a-week or once-a-month activity. It is at least a 2–3 times-per-week directed effort to improve highly specific parts of your sales attack.

It not only works out the “what” you say but the “how” and “why” as well.

Set your team up for maximum success by planning practice time in advance. You should front-load your practice time and stretch it out as you improve your targets.

For example, if your company launches a new product line, role-play every day for 2 weeks. As reps improve, reduce role-plays to 3 times per week, then 2, then 1 if they are really getting dialed in.

PREPARE YOUR SCOUTING REPORT

Build your role-play routine based on real-world interactions. Leveraging technology is your best play here.

Tools such as Gong.io and Chorus.ai can provide insights into trouble spots in your reps' talk tracks, tactics, and delivery. It can also line up some fantastic objections to practice against.

- Begin collecting popular objections while reviewing call recordings.
- Then use them to test your reps' rapid-response abilities and train their skills in overcoming them.

EXPAND YOUR TRAINING FOCUS

Positioning statements and objection responses are definitely important parts of role-plays, but far from the only parts. Crank up the effectiveness of practice sessions by keying on other important parts of successful sales conversations.

Intonation, energy and articulation are vital to successful talk tracks, as well as pace and vocabulary. Even the best messages and objection responses can be done in by a lack of enthusiasm, speaking too fast/slow, and using words that are insider-speak or used to boost the perceived intelligence of the rep.

An excellent way to ensure you are listening closely for these characteristics is to create a scorecard for each session.

- Use a scale of 1–10 for each category.
- As you work through your role-play schedule, look for a pattern

of positive improvement (or negative). Trust me, it will emerge.

- You can also aggregate these scores and create an overall performance matrix to classify capabilities. This also provides opportunities for competitions and incentives tied to intentional improvement.

NO SURPRISES

Provide your reps (or have your reps provide you) with the framework and intended goals for each practice session. This produces more creative thinking for the reps, helping them to develop quality delivery in their own voice.

As you grow your practice routine, reps will begin identifying their own areas in need of improvement, and set goals they want you to help them with.

Since keeping your sales role-play exercises as close to the real-world as possible is key to its success, having a rep prepare for the role-play as they would a real sales call is in line with this directive.

BE THE BUYER

It's time to role-play! Typically, role-plays are conducted between rep and rep, or rep and manager. In either scenario, the player in the buyer's seat has to lay down the team-member hat and put on the buyer hat.

Even the most accomplished salesperson or sales leader has been a customer at some point. Use this experience to become the customer for your training partner.

- Truly consider the persona and scenario you are working within.
- Think of the daily challenges faced by the persona/role, what is important to their business, and how they may react to this particular call.
- It can be difficult, especially in the rep-to-rep role-play exercises, but try to keep the wild and crazy responses to a minimum to maximize the effectiveness of the training session.

IF YOU PROVIDE FEEDBACK, THEY WILL COME

This is gold: the secret sauce where the rep finally steps into the cage for batting practice.

Feedback is how role-plays create behavioral change in reps, and there is a "right way" to do it.

ALWAYS keep your feedback kind and encouraging. Sales is difficult. We all know that. Practice is for improving, so let the prospects dish out the beatings.

Provide real-time coaching. Don't allow a rep to continue past a real hiccup. Stop the role-play, provide the feedback, then begin the role-play again. This will ensure the rep develops along the correct pathways and with proper timing.

If the rep is progressing nicely with the role-play, provide positive reinforcement by allowing the session to progress towards a win for the rep. Don't be afraid to pepper in some objections as necessary, but again, reinforce positively by allowing progression if the rep deftly overcomes them.

Finally, debrief the session with the rep. Provide the rep with their scores, discuss goal attainment, and follow up for effectiveness of sales objectives.

WRAP UP

There has never been a championship team, gold medal Olympian, or Greatest Of All Time that achieved winning status without practice and training.

In fact, a case could be made that far more of their time was spent in practice and training than actually competing.

If your goal is to equip your sales teams with the highest ability to convert calls and close deals, there is no better way to achieve this than regular, reality-based, and highly structured practice.

Make the time for it, build your practice facilities, and transform your teams into a well-oiled closing machine! ■

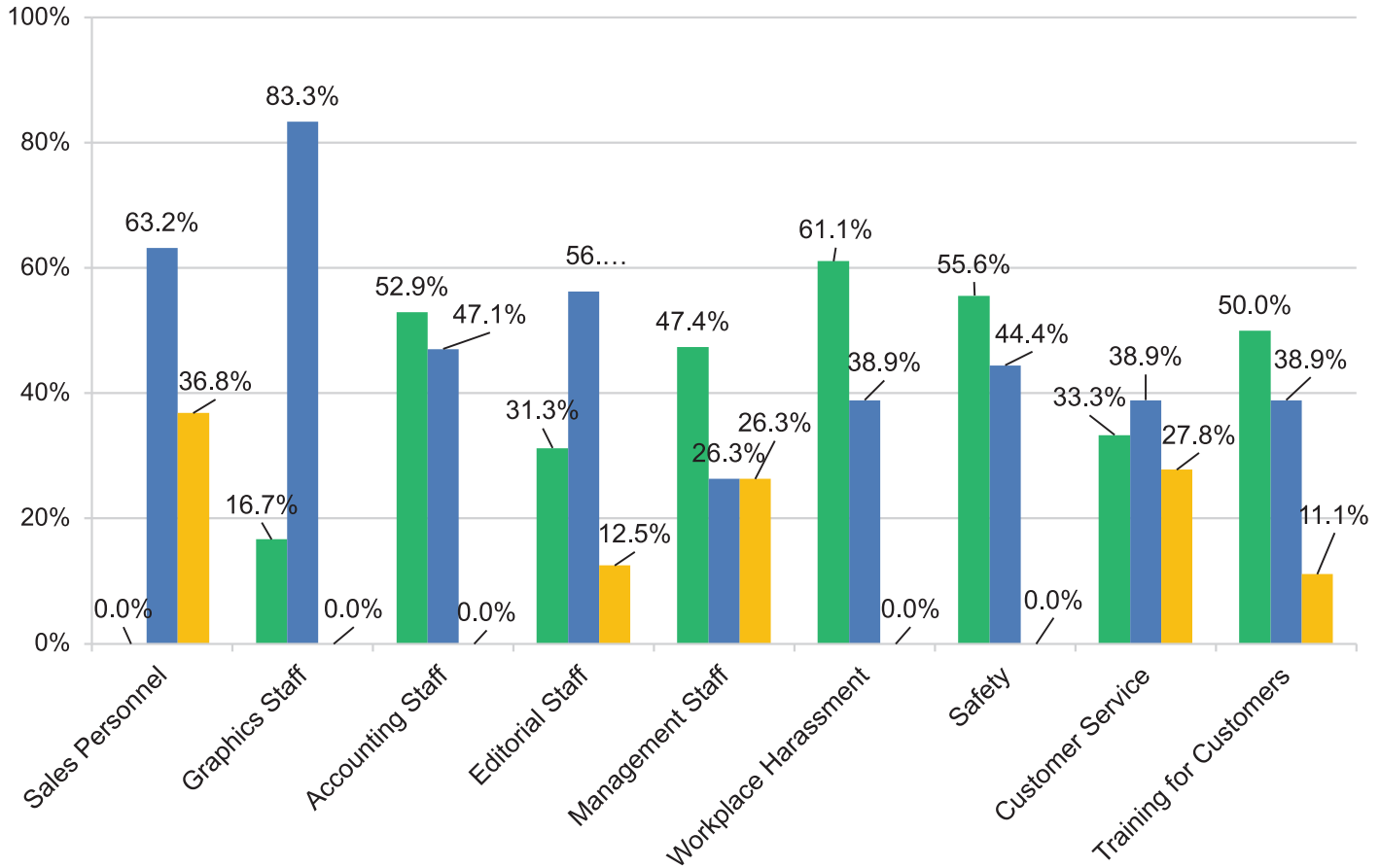
Original Article:
<https://www.salesbacker.com/sales-role-play-exercises/>

THE SURVEY SAYS...

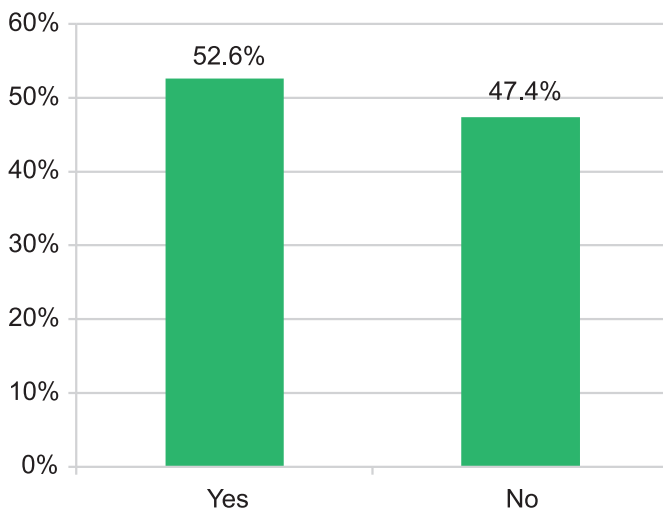


How often do you provide training for the following positions/topics?

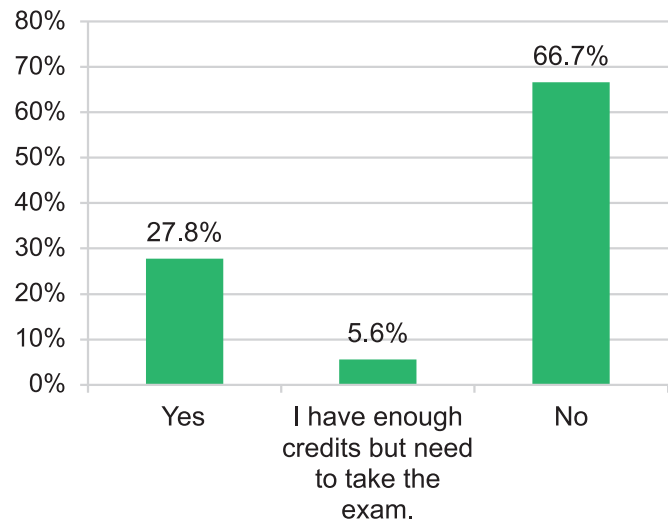
■ Never ■ Occasionally ■ Regularly (at least monthly)



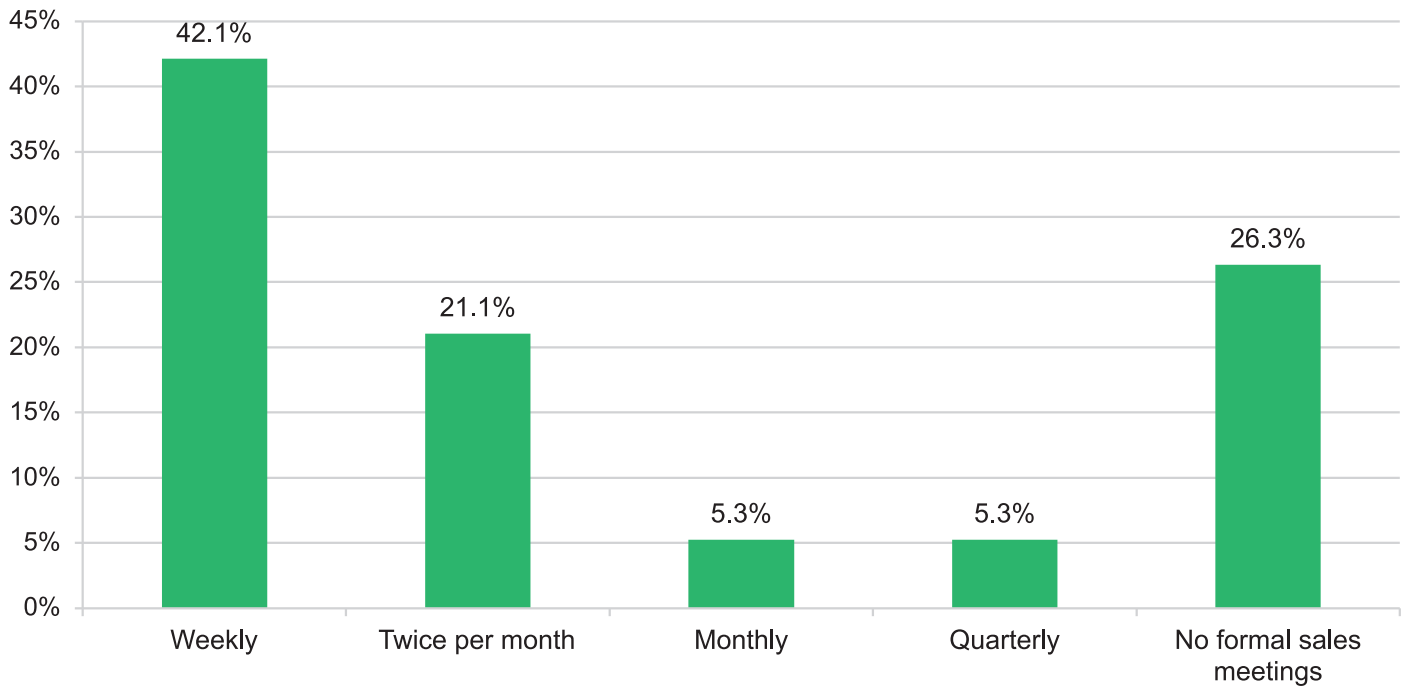
Have you ever taken TLI Sales Training classes?



Do you have your AAE Certification from TLI?

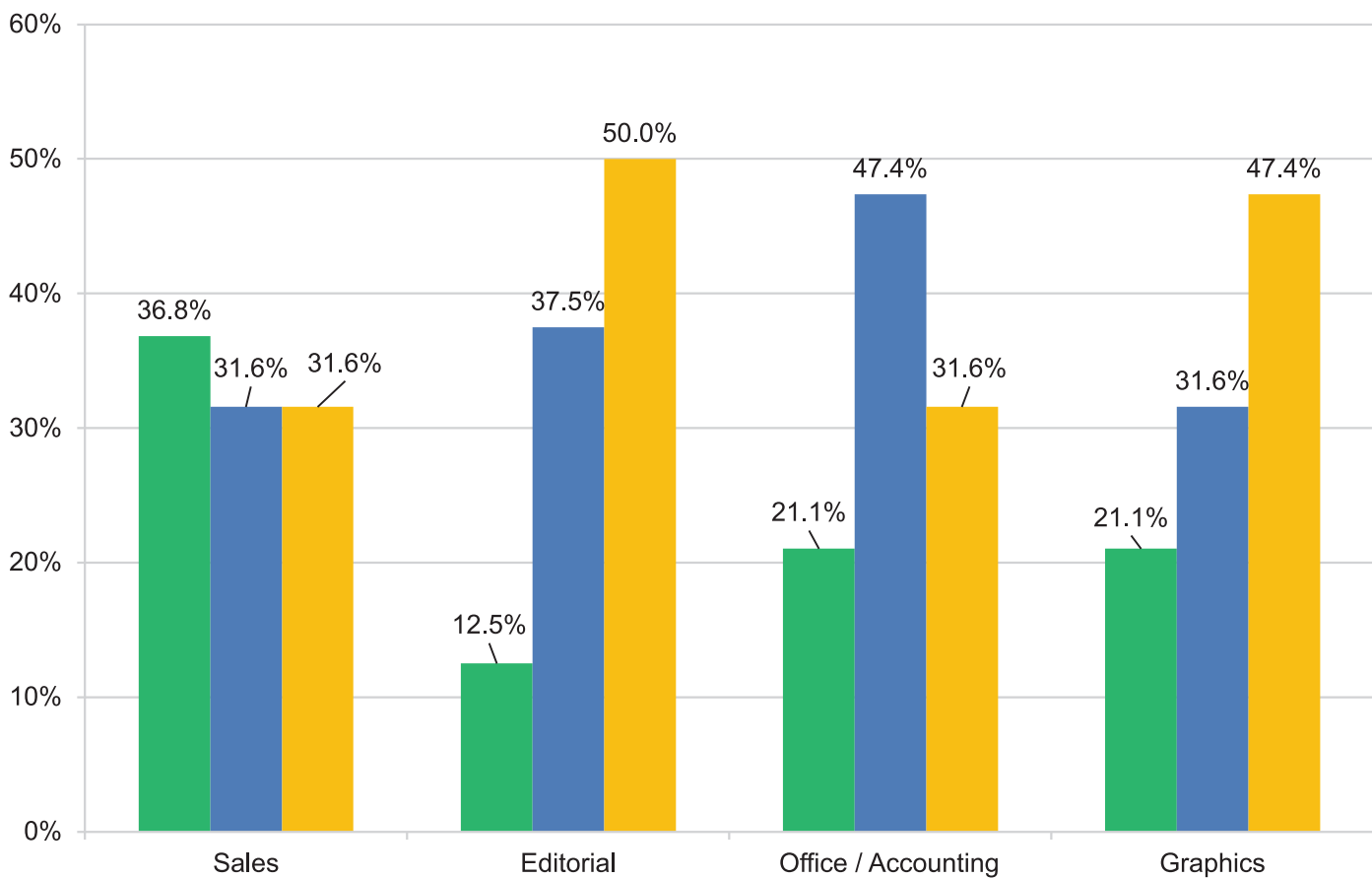


How often do you have formal sales meetings with your sales team (select the closest answer)?



Do you have a formal (written) onboarding program for new hires in the following departments?

■ Yes
 ■ No
 ■ We have an informal program



10 BENEFITS OF SALES TRAINING

BY ROBERT MCKERNAN

Sales training has a proven benefit to a company's bottom line. However, many businesses are still hesitant to invest in proper sales training. Choosing a recommended sales trainer such as Robert McKernan is a critical decision for any company. The benefits of a great sales program are indispensable for the growth and culture of any organization.

It can make a huge difference to your company's overall performance in addition to improving the overall well-being of your sales representatives. It can even inspire them to grow and past their limits and achieve new areas of success in their lives. If you're still wondering how sales training can benefit your organization, here are 10 benefits your business can gain from effective sales training:

1. SALES TRAINING CAN BOOST REVENUE

Improvements in the skills of your sales force will without a doubt bring in more revenue for your organization. It would only make sense that since revenue is what keeps your company going, that you would want everyone on your sales team to be firing on all cylinders. Effective training will keep everyone sharp and on their toes, directly impacting sales and revenue.

2. SALES TRAINING CAN IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY

A steady regiment of proper and effective sales training can give your sales team the confidence to take care of tasks and objectives without being asked or told to. The benefits of sales training can give the team clear and

defined steps and make them more productive by motivating them to be more efficient and effective.

3. SALES TRAINING CAN HELP CLOSE BIGGER DEALS

Sales training can help your team close deals more often or even reel in bigger fish. Your sales force becomes proficient at closing deals when sales reps hone their skills and gain the confidence to tackle more responsibilities. Training can help instill best practices that sales reps can fine tune as they close more deals.

4. TRAINING CAN STRENGTHEN YOUR ORGANIZATION

Good sales training can bring the team together for a win, but great sales trainers turn teams into champions. The same is true for your sales team. Think of a sales trainer as a beacon of morale for your sales representatives. Great sales training won't just improve individual performance but it can also instill a sense of unity and teamwork within your network of sales representatives. There are a lot of moving parts involved in closing a deal. Great sales training can ensure that everything is running like clockwork.

5. SALES TRAINING CAN HELP BRING IN NEW CLIENTS AND APPEASE CURRENT ONES

While repeat business is likely essential, it could get difficult to dig your team out of a rut of not being able to bring in new clients. Great sales training has the added benefit of inspiring and motivating sales representatives to feel more comfortable about taking risks which can lead to big deals and clients.

Great sales training can also improve your customer service which can, in turn, appease your clients and raise awareness about your business through word-of-mouth.

6. TRAINING CAN IMPROVE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

People appreciate being trained because of the comfort of having directions and clear instructions. Training provides sales representatives with guidelines that could potentially help them to be better at their jobs, which in turn improves satisfaction. You want your sales representatives to enjoy their jobs. Fulfillment comes through success. Effective sales training can improve employee satisfaction through a sense of accomplishment.

“ Sales representatives that develop and learn from effective sales training learn how to think better on their feet by improving their decision-making skills. They are much more adept at recognizing opportunities and capitalizing on them which in turn can enrich their lives in more ways than just closing a deal.

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7. SALES TRAINING CAN HELP IMPROVE EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The benefits of sales training go far beyond just increased revenue. The challenges and obstacles one overcomes professionally are not unlike many of the personal challenges we face every day. Sales representatives that develop and learn from effective sales training learn how to think better on their feet by improving their decision-making skills. They are much more adept at recognizing opportunities and capitalizing on them which in turn can enrich their lives in more ways than just closing a deal.

8. TRAINING CAN INSPIRE CREATIVITY

Great sales trainers are masters at listening and observing, that's no secret. A great sales trainer will not only support the new and alterna-

tives ideas and solutions to problems by sales representatives, they will also help to fine-tune these ideas with their rigorous questioning. The benefit of having a great sales trainer is that they are great springboards for adventurous ideas and will also help sales representatives to achieve these ideas with realistic goals.

9. TRAINING CAN IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

You can't sell anything if you don't know everything there is to know about your product or service. A good sales trainer will educate sales representatives about the products and services they are selling. Sales trainers will ensure sales representatives can speak about the most important highlights of their products and services so as to help prospects understand the benefits

and importance of what your organization has to offer.

10. SALES TRAINING CAN HELP COMPANIES PROSPER THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES

Sales Training can help turn things around when a company is an enduring adversity and uncertainty. Sales training benefits organizations of all sizes. The benefits of Sales training include: an increase in your organization's overall business performance, maintain and improve the morale of your sales representatives, strengthen your employee's resolve and commitment to the company, develop solid leaders by instilling confidence, and improve the capacity of your team to adapt to setbacks. ■

Original Article:

<https://robertmckernan.com/project/10-benefits-of-sales-training/>

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“ The only thing worse than training your employees and **having them leave**...is not training them and **having them stay**.

— Henry Ford

If you aren't using the ACP On Demand Training Center, **WHY NOT? YOU SHOULD BE!** Here's why:

- PSU can increase your sales by 40% or more in the next 12 months flat with this online sales training and coaching program!
- PSU has over 125 modules of training totaling over 28 hours total of world class sales training.
- Training for salespeople at any experience level.
- This training would normally cost you \$1500/month, but ACP members can access this program at **NO CHARGE** as a part of your member benefits package!
- The training center also includes over 8 hours of **INDUSTRY SPECIFIC** training from TLI for new hires or can be used as a great refresher for seasoned salespeople.
- On demand training designed to fit within your schedule, 24/7. Train at your own pace at a time that is convenient for **YOU!**
- Help recruiting and retention – Give your existing team and potential new hires something that will set you apart from the competition. Studies show that professional development opportunities greatly increase retention and help you attract new employees.

Let ACP help take your sales team to the next level. Take advantage of this amazing member benefit **TODAY!** What are you waiting for?

The past few years have been hard on everyone. We understand

that in many cases, it is no longer feasible for publishers to bring their sales team to the annual conference or other in-person events for training. And virtual training sessions don't always fit within everyone's schedules. So, we decided to look for ways that we could bring the training to you! The ACP On Demand Training Center offers 24/7 training that can be completed on an individual basis or in a group setting, depending on your needs. It offers both industry specific sales training from The Leadership Institute (TLI) as well as a world-class, general sales training program for your team, brought to you by Power Sales University, all in one place.

With this new platform, we are now able to offer you over 125 interactive sales training modules from the Power Sales University platform. Regardless of prior experience or training, this program guides you through every critical aspect of sales methodology in a short, easily digestible, and actionable way for you to immediately implement in the field, the techniques you learn. It will also give you access to a series of videos where the sales trainer has recorded himself on real-world, live sales calls and walks you through his technique piece by piece.

The PSU material is designed with flexibility in mind so you can either have your sales team work individually at their own pace, or, if you choose, it can be used for training in a team setting, giving you the cues to stop for discussion with your team at certain points. This could come in handy for those who conduct sales meetings on a regular basis. You can

also assign training to specific users, create teams in the platform, manage users and receive notifications upon completion of assignments for your staff if desired. These are just a few examples of the wide range of tools the new On Demand Training Center will offer. Another great feature is that the PSU modules are short – most of them are less than 20 minutes in length.

As for the TLI side, we have a great training series for new hires or salespeople who are just beginning a sales training program. This is a series of 8 classes with Rob Zarrilli, our TLI Dean, which are very specific to the industry. They run through the basics of the sales process, specifically relating to advertising sales. These TLI training videos are a little bit longer, averaging about an hour each with a 10-question exam at the end of each. As we work to broaden our recorded material library, we will soon have some other higher level TLI classes available as well, and we will continue to add to that library over time. Our goal is to add additional industry specific training for a range of other departments including graphics and editorial in the future, as well.

Whether you're using the TLI training or the PSU training, you will be sure to find something for everyone. From the salesperson on their first day in the field, to the most seasoned sales professional, no matter what level you are, you will take something away from this training.

We would like to take a moment here to thank ACP Board Member Joe Nicastro for bringing PSU to the

SALES TRAINING FEATURE

table. Having used the PSU training in the past, Joe was impressed enough with the program that he thought providing it to our membership would be a great benefit for everyone and we certainly agree!

Over the past 10 months since we launched, we've had several ACP members take advantage of this new opportunity. We asked a few of them to share their overall opinion based on experience, so here is what they had to say:

"Power Sales University offers even the most seasoned salespeople some new phrases and techniques to use. After watching the sessions in PSU, both newer salespeople and older ones found common ground in discussions about what was taught. It really brings the whole team together."

– Missy Traeger,
Star Publications

"I've been through an extensive amount of training in 38+ years at Kapp, but I am so excited about this. I wish I would have had the PSU training modules when I first started. While not industry specific, everything I have viewed can be applied in our industry. I often "rewind" the video to hear a great point over again & have watched a few twice. And I can't say enough about Rob's TLI courses. I have always enjoyed TLI training. This site is the best of both worlds."

– Jane Quairoli,
Kapp Advertising Service

"Power sales is a good refresher for anyone who interacts with clients. I wholeheartedly agree with what Jason says at the end of each session, "the learning never stops!" Thank you, ACP for providing this powerful learning tool as a member benefit."

– Lisa Miller, New Century Press

"They were excellent classes to take and really help build confidence. They did a great job teaching you the skills to use when trying to sell."

– Ronda Edwards,
Clearwater Progress

This benefit is included for all current ACP members in good standing at no cost to you, saving you thousands of dollars a year. You have nothing to lose and only increased sales to gain! Contact the ACP office at 877.203.2327 to get started today. We also have a training video available on the ACP website to make it as easy as possible to get started.

We are confident that if you commit to giving the ACP On Demand Training Center a try, it will be well worth your time investment and benefit you and your staff in many ways. ■

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

G2 - Article

35 Sales Enablement Statistics That Will Blow Your Mind

This article offers solid statistical support for helping understand why sales enablement can be critical to sales success.



Fit Small Business - Article

23 Sales Statistics You Need to Know

There is an enormous amount of information here that relate to what buyers are looking for from salespeople. Covering areas all the way from sales enablement to sales training, if you believe in numbers – this article is for you.



CloserIQ - Blog Article

7 Components of a Successful Sales Training Program

by James Meincke

Here are seven important components to consider when reviewing your sales training program to make sure you are including all the critical skills.



GURU99 - Article

35 Best FREE LinkedIn Learning Courses with Certifications (2023)

by Amanda Henderson

Great list of LinkedIn training that is available for FREE with convenient one-click access to the actual courses.



GURU99 - Article

5 Best FREE Proofreading Courses Online with Certificate (2023)

by Alyssa Walker

An excellent list of both free and paid options to make sure your content is presented correctly. This skillset is one well worth developing with additional training.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

HSI – Blog Article

Best Practices for Training Employees in Small Businesses

Although this article is written from a company focused on workplace safety, the practices are applicable to many areas of employee training at small businesses everywhere.



Harvard Business Review – Article

Role Playing as a Sales Training Tool

By Larry J.B. Robinson

Although written some time ago, this article about training in a jewelry store offers some great insights and advice on effective role playing in any sales environment.



Business Insider – Reviews

The 22 best online courses to learn Adobe Suite programs, whether you're new to Photoshop or want to become an After Effects pro

Great review of training options for all Adobe Suite programs from a variety of sources.



Fit Small Business – Article

6 Best QuickBooks Training Courses for 2023

Excellent options for both free and fee based training related to the software that has a 66.1% market share of accounting software.



Newest addition for your “Advertiser Help Page” Listings

Finances Online – Research Summary

26 Relevant Print Marketing Statistics: 2023 Ad Spending & Impact

If you are looking for solid statistics illustrating print is alive and well and still outperforming other options in a number of ways – you are going to love digging through this treasure trove of statistics.



A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE

NO INK TO DRY

BY CRAIG TRONGAARD

A few weeks past Lee Borowski and I met for lunch as we both were past AFCP President's and enjoy reminiscing about the association back then, and its members. Somewhere in the conversation she asked how and when did my career in the shopper business begin. After telling her my story it was not too many days later she called me and asked if I would write my story and be willing to share it. How do you say no to Lee?

Imagine if you will trying to recall events and time lines from over 50 years ago! But in the end, my memory does accurately capture the time and place of how some of us got into this line of publishing and for a few that had to get out. Here it is:

Late 1966 or early 67 a want ad in the Sioux City Journal noted a shopper in western Iowa was for sale. Upon inquiry, the paper, a shopper, circulated in Onawa and several small towns south with roughly 3,000 to 4,000 circulation. Called The Grapevine, it was owned for an unknown period by the pastor of a small church in South Sioux City, Nebraska. Can you imagine?

After meeting with the pastor, my wife and I made an offer and bought the shopper for about \$5,000. Assets consisted of the paper, sheet fed press, box camera, strip printer with half dozen strip negative fonts,

graphic illustration books, receivables and a jogger for the mail room. We had no legal paperwork done, just a check and hand shake.

We ran the shopper out of our home in Sioux City for the first half dozen issues. I pressed it on the 1250 Multilith sheet fed. It soon became evident this single sheet format was not going anywhere so we quickly jobbed the printing out to a web press printer in Vermillion, South Dakota. For better part of a year things were going well, the paper looked great, expanded the distribution and was being well received by the advertisers and readers. Business was growing! Then on January 28th, 1968, the US Navy Ship Pueblo was captured by the North Koreans and taken into their port. Shortly thereafter President Lyndon Johnson called to active duty several guard units of which the air guard unit I belonged to in Sioux City was one of them. I believe they gave a few of us that had a business a couple days to "what do I do now" with the business.

During these couple days, a local tv station interviewed me as to what was I going to do with my business now that I was recalled to active duty? Being Mary and I were the only employees and she was soon to have our first child my response was simply, "I don't know".

The same night as that broadcast John Holmes, owner of the Whiting Newspaper called me to extend help in any way he could while I was gone. He offered to literally run the shopper for us or was willing to buy it if that was what I would prefer. I had been thinking of having to sell and had a price range based on sales/profits and potential. After a few minutes on the phone we agreed to a price with terms. Those being 12 monthly payments at an interest rate that was current at the time. He did not want the press equipment and said he would collect all the receivables at no cost, both current and aged, and send a monthly check on those collections. That was the extent of our agreement. Neither one of us ever brought up the need to having papers drawn up, for us there was no need to, our word was not negotiable and it played out exactly as John proposed. There was no ink to dry!

It made a lot of sense for John to acquire the Grapevine whose distribution was directly south of his area, and the cross-selling potential was a given. I saw John at one of our AFCP meetings and we both spoke on would that kind of verbal agreement fly today? No.

P.S. I often wished I would have kept the strip printer and fonts. It was unique and first generation in cold type composition. ■

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NEVER STOP GROWING



BY KARA IVISON –
ACP RISING STAR

““ Never stop learning; for when we stop learning we stop growing.

— Loyal Jack Hewman

In our everyday lives, we know learning a new skill or hobby helps nurture our mind, boosts confidence, and beats boredom—as a creative person myself, I have recently been learning how to crochet (*shout out to The Woobles*). But, have you thought about your business much in the same sense?

The past two years of my position at Genesee Valley Publications has been kind of unexpected... in a good way. I started as a Graphic Designer five years ago, then we as a company (and myself) had expanded into including our own digital side of services. Now when someone asks what I do for the company I simply say “all things digital” with a bit of a chuckle because it truly is, if you have a digital campaign idea, we will use our experience and resources to get it done. I’m not sure if five years ago we planned to add social media ads for our customers, website and e-commerce options on multiple platforms, and/or programmatic display ads to our repertoire of services, but when you stop learning, you stop growing.

Don’t get me wrong, it didn’t happen all at once and it took a lot of training and learning about what these services even looked like, the best way to go about implementing them, teaching our ad consultants and more. For example, when we added an option to ‘boost your print ad on Facebook’ we had a large handful of customers add it. We posted it to our page and then “boosted” it on Facebook. Not only did this mean we were posting twenty plus times that day (*and Facebook frowns on that*) the impressions/reach results weren’t quite as high as we would have liked.

Fast forward to today, we know how to utilize the Facebook Ads Manager to create ads for our customers with their same print ad information that gives results in the thousands of impressions and links back to their websites. On a similar note, I can’t tell you how little I knew about programmatic display ads before adding them to our services and going through quite a few hours of training... and I am sure I’m not the only one within our company who can say that. Even so, going over questions and trainings once a month or so is essential to keep understanding about all we can do and offer now.

Training plays a key part in what we do and how we continue to evolve and grow. Of course, new skills may seem daunting to try to learn—or even figure out how to start—but use any and all resources available, ask questions, and sometimes you just have to give it a shot.

May you (*and your business*) never stop growing. ■

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“Chance favors the prepared mind.

— Louis Pasteur

BY JIM BUSCH

I came across this quote when I was a young man trying to figure out how to make my way through life. I adopted it as my personal motto and spent a good bit of my life trying to live up to it. Chance or luck is a very polarizing concept. Some believe luck is a myth while others believe that it determines one's success in life. Studies have found that successful people minimize the impact of luck on their life, they prefer to take credit for what they've accomplished. Less successful people believe that "some people have all the luck!" They believe that some mysterious force decides who becomes successful, and who fails to make the grade. That the universe favors some individuals and punishes others. Scientists looking into the phenomenon have discovered that there is indeed some magic involved in whether a person is lucky, or not. The magic doesn't exist in the ether, or the spirit world, but rather in the brains, and hearts of "lucky" people. The researchers found that the same opportunities are presented to both "lucky," and "unlucky" people, the difference is that people who expect to find opportunities, grab onto them, while the people who believe they are destined to fail, pass them by. Another thing that distinguishes the fortunate from the unfortunate is that the "lucky" people prepare themselves for the opportunities they expect to find. They are constantly trying to expand their knowledge, and polish their skills. "Lucky" salespeople read books, and blogs that make them better at their job. They study human psychology and take every available training class so that they will have the skills needed to exploit every opportunity to win new customers that arises. This training makes them more confident in their abilities, and more inclined to seek out additional opportunities, believing they will be able to close a sale. This creates a growth cycle where the "lucky" people, become "luckier" with every book they read, and every class they take. The combination of a positive outlook, and, in Pasteur's words, a prepared mind, makes a salesperson unstoppable. While their "unlucky" peers decide that training is a waste of time because customers "aren't going to buy from me anyways," those lucky stiffs, "who get all the breaks," are busy prospecting and training to turn opportunities into sales. Luck really does love a prepared mind! ■

A SALES PRINCIPLE THAT BEARS REPEATING



BY JOHN FOUST
GREENSBORO, NC

Carl is a marketing manager who has been on the receiving end of hundreds of media presentations. He knows a thing or two about effective sales techniques. “Most of the time, I’m the point person to gather information about advertising options,” he said. “I frequently need to pass information along to others in the company. Usually there’s a written proposal, but that doesn’t tell the whole story.

“To make fair decisions, I need to share the key points I hear,” he explained. “It’s important for sales people to provide me with solid, repeatable product information. The best presentations make those printed proposals come to life.”

Be repeatable. That’s a strong recommendation from Carl. Here are some ways to accomplish that in a sales presentation:

1. KEEP IT SIMPLE. This is the first rule for just about every type of communication, because we are bombarded with more messages than ever before. The simple messages have sticking power, while the complicated ones get lost in the crowd.

I’m reminded of the Telephone Game, an old school child’s game which demonstrates how a message can change as it is relayed to others. People sit or stand in a line or circle. The first person whispers a phrase to the second person, who whispers it to the third. And so it goes, until the last person announces the message as he or she heard it. Unless it is simple, the ending message usually bears only a faint resemblance to the initial words.

To make things clear and repeatable, eliminate technical terminology and use language that is easy to understand.

2. MAKE IT VISUAL. We think in pictures. That’s why it’s natural for us to have a better memory for visual images than for words. The more vivid the image, the easier it is to repeat to others.

A sales person once told me about using a Venn diagram in a presentation. She drew three overlapping circles on her legal pad. One circle represented the print edition of her newspaper, one represented their online product and one represented other media being used by the advertiser. The segment where all three overlapped indicated those times when all three had to be carefully coordinated to work together. It was a clear visual image which gave the advertiser a repeatable sales point.

3. MAKE IT PERSONAL. Cookie-cutter presentations are a waste of time for everyone – especially prospects. Of course, there are standard things which should be included in every presentation, but each one must have a stamp of individuality. A presentation should be about the prospect and no one else.

A person’s favorite topic of conversation is himself or herself. And a decision maker’s favorite topic is the decision. To make a presentation personal, show the other person – and his or her company – how they can benefit from the ideas you are proposing. Talk about results from their unique point of view.

Without a doubt, if you create repeatable sales points, you’ll increase your chances of making that big sale. ■

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John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com

Graphic Hooks

By Ellen Hanrahan

hanrahan.ln@att.net © 03/2023

The Basics... forming an essential foundation. Understanding the fundamental principles of a skill, in this case, design.

This will be a bit “wordy,” but since our world is very visual, we need to learn how to develop skills to maintain unity, comprehension and perception.

Readability and Legibility

Readability and legibility are type attributes that are always a part of any design consideration. They will eventually be an integral part of your design process.

Readability is the “comfort level” that we achieve—the ease in reading text.

Legibility refers to the clarity of the individual characters and relies on the specific and inherent characteristics of any given typeface.

As designers, we have total control over both the readability and legibility of the information that we present. The correct typeface and its use can make a huge difference in creating clear and effective advertising. Since this is something that we can control, we should be aware of its impact. The following are key components regarding readability and legibility.

When we read, we read in groupings of words, rather than concentrating on every single word in the sentence. Readability takes into account a number of factors, but our primary concern is the use of type in our advertising and other communications. Because the designer can control the readability of the information presented, it is a choice that every designer needs to make so information is easy to understand.

The following factors can make an impact on the readability of our printed information, therefore it is wise to become familiar with the following functions:

Readability:

Uppercase & Lowercase

Uppercase letter, or “caps” don’t really have a distinctive look—most of the letters have a square shape to them—making it more difficult to recognize their individual characteristics. Check out the following:

DIFFICULTY IN READING THIS TEXT COMES FROM THE FACT THAT ALL THE CHARACTERS HAVE A “SAMENESS.”

WE ARE TRYING TO RECOGNIZE WORDS WITH OTHER LETTERS THAT HAVE THE SAME SHAPE.

IN A SANS SERIF TYPEFACE, WE MAY HAVE EVEN MORE TROUBLE IN TRYING TO DISTINGUISH THE INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS THAT USUALLY ALLOW US TO “SKIM” THROUGH THE INFORMATION.

All-cap samples at the bottom of the first column can be tiring for readers and can also limit the reading speed.

Lowercase letters are much easier to recognize because their shape is more distinctive, and it’s the responsibility of the designer to choose type wisely.

Letterspace and Wordspace

Letterspace simply refers to the amount of space between each letter. There should be enough space to allow for individual letter, or character recognition. **Letter-spacing** should be neither too tight nor too loose. For example, the text you are reading now is composed of letters that are spaced too close together. It again becomes harder to recognize the individual characteristics of each letter.

On the other hand, you can also have **letterspacing** that is too loose, again making it difficult to determine where the words themselves end. Too much space between the letters is just as difficult to read as letters that are too close together.

There will be times when you want to change the space between letters. Most often this will occur when you run into words where optical spacing is better. Take a look...

AWAY VACATION Truck Vacuum Water
AWAY VACATION Truck Vacuum Water

The space between the letters on the first line are mechanically correct, but separate some parts of the word too greatly. Optical or visual spacing now determines how the word reads.

Removing space between certain pairs of letters results in letterspacing that appears more consistent throughout the entire word. Letters were “tucked” or more correctly, “kerned,” to achieve the correct visual spacing.

Wordspacing is the space between words. Too much wordspacing creates reading problems by isolating words. See how “gaps” between these words and lines of type distract eye movement? The large spaces that occur between these words form “rivers,” most often occurring in type that’s justified. There are ways to correct irregular spacing.

Point Size: Type is measured in point sizes and can be adjusted. Type that is 18 points or larger is traditionally considered display type, while type that’s smaller is text type, but again, that can vary depending on the particular typeface.

Reverse Type: White type on a black background presents its own problems when the type is too small or has thick and thin serifs. This can slow readability significantly, especially on newsprint.

Line Length & Line Space: Most readers scan the words on a page. The most comfortable grouping is three to four words that are “seen” at one time, so it is necessary to be aware of the column width and the point size of the type. These two factors work hand in hand. Narrow columns require smaller point sizes, while larger columns can accommodate larger point sizes in type. The rule of thumb used to determine line length was 1½–2 times the point size. Still a good guideline today.

Linespace, or “leading” (pronounced **led-ding**), refers to the amount of space between the lines of type and is measured from baseline to baseline.

Leading is dependent upon such factors as the typeface and the x-height of lowercase letters.

Type Alignment: You can arrange type in a number of ways: Flush left or left aligned; Flush right or right aligned; Justified (type is flush on both right and left), and Centered.

Legibility Type Weight: Type families come in various weights—Light, Roman, Book, Bold, Ultra, etc. Typefaces that are very bold or very light tend to rate low on the legibility scale. “Grunge” typefaces or “decorative” typefaces need to be used with a discerning eye. They become very difficult to read. If you aren’t sure of mixing type, select a typeface that offers a number of different weights.

Type Shape: Each character has a unique shape and we can recognize those letter shapes. The dominant shapes can be divided into four categories—vertical, curved, a combination of vertical and curved and oblique. Condensed and expanded typefaces can make reading more difficult—try not to distort the characters any more than necessary and try to find a condensed typeface rather than condensing your own. The integrity of the character may be lost.

Serif and Sans-Serif: Serif typefaces appear to have little “feet” or strokes as part of the main vertical or diagonal stem. Sans, which means “without,” refers to type without serifs. The best way to determine which is the most appropriate typeface to use is practical application, past experience and your audience.

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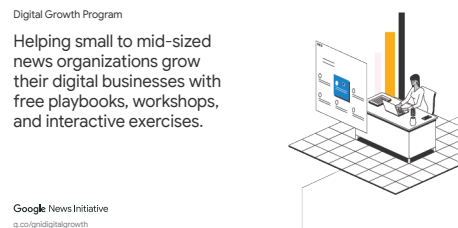
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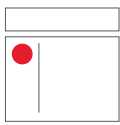
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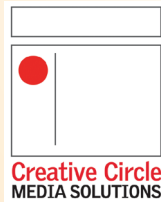
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