Selling Secrets

5 Strategies For Elevating Sales Productivity and Performance

mindtickle

No matter the time of year, the top priority for sales leaders is simple: drive more revenue. The reality is that this goal rests heavily on whether or not your sellers are ready with the competencies, knowledge, content, behaviors and intelligence that drive better outcomes.

You might have the best tech at your disposal and a great product offering, but those things don't matter if your reps aren't ready to sell.

At Mindtickle, we know a thing or two about driving revenue by elevating sales performance. So we put together this guide to highlight some of our best selling secrets and strategies that will arm your sales team with the skills and resources they need to hit their targets.

In the following pages, we'll take a look at a profile of a true selling master and outline how to develop those same skills and competencies in your own reps. We'll explore what knowledge is required for reps to deliver valuable insights to your buyers, and how you can incorporate content into your sales process to close more deals. Then, we'll explore how you can gain more visibility into those pivotal sales calls, and use data to fuel your coaching conversations – making your team even more effective.

Sales excellence doesn't happen overnight, but incorporating these strategies into your business operations is sure to help level-up your reps' performance this quarter and beyond – which ultimately means more revenue. Let's dive in.

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Contents

1 Establish the ideal rep profile

The first step in developing a winning sales force is determining a profile of your ideal sales rep, then cultivating that skillset across your team. What skills does this rep have? How do they stay at the top of their game? How is success measured?

On the next page we've highlighted the competencies that, in general, make for a great sales rep. As you build out the profile of an ideal rep at your organization, you may want to get more granular about specific knowledge areas that relate to your industry or product.

Once you've established the ideal rep profile, you can then build training programs for those same skills, encouraging the same learning behaviors across your team.

RAMP UP EFFICIENCY

- [ ] Hits 30, 60 and 90-day onboarding milestones outlined by sales leadership
- [ ] Successfully completes sales onboarding program within first 90 days on the job
- [ ] Closes first deal within 90 days + the length of your average sales cycle

ONGOING LEARNING BEHAVIORS

- [ ] Engages with training content (watches videos, reads documents and completes knowledge checks)
- [ ] Completes on-demand learning modules
- [ ] Scores highly on all quizzes and assignments
- [ ] Provides feedback on ongoing training initiatives
- [ ] Has earned necessary certifications
- [ ] Scores highly on competency quizzes and knowledge checks

KEY COMPETENCIES

- [ ] Extensive knowledge of product offering, market share and competitors
- [ ] Understands and uses consistent product messaging
- [ ] Is able to narrate pitch deck
- [ ] Limits use of filler words on sales calls
- [ ] Asks the appropriate discovery questions
- [ ] Follows your organization’s sales methodology
- [ ] Adept at objection handling

PERFORMANCE

- [ ] Achieves quarterly sales quotas
- [ ] Demonstrates improvement after coaching conversations
- [ ] Has higher than average competitive win rates
- [ ] Closes higher than average deal sizes
- [ ] Achieves pipeline creation goals
- [ ] Is accurate in deal forecasts

2 Determine what every sales rep must know

In the previous section, we highlighted some key competencies of an all-star seller. Now let's dig into exactly what kind of knowledge is required for reps to deliver insight and value to every prospect.

INDUSTRY NEWS AND TRENDS

Having an understanding of what's going on in your industry helps reps initiate genuine and relevant conversations with potential buyers. They'll also be perceived as knowledgeable and trustworthy.

WIN/LOSS REPORTS OF TYPICAL BUYER PROFILES

Evaluating past successes and mistakes helps reps learn from similar situations and approach their sales conversations with more context.

HOW TO HANDLE OBJECTIONS

Objection handling is an ongoing learning curve for most reps, but it's important for reps to understand common objections and how their peers have overcome them.

WHAT YOUR SALES PROCESS LOOKS LIKE

Before each sales cycle, reps should know every step of the process and what's required of them at each stage.

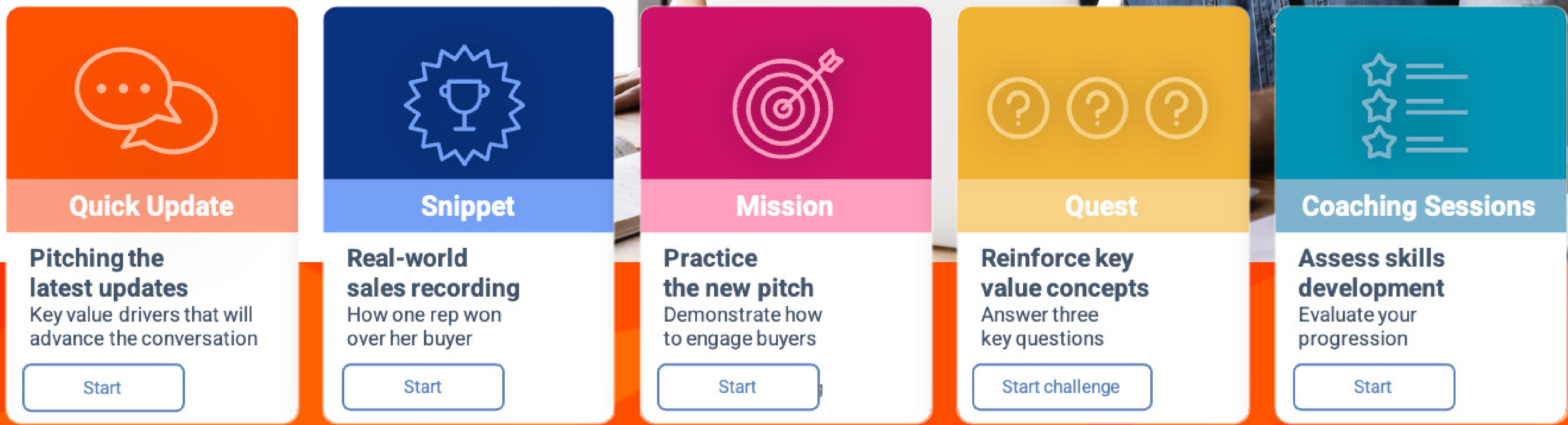
HOW TO PITCH AND DEMO YOUR SOLUTION

Your sales reps are the front-line experts when it comes to your solution. Make sure they're on-message when it comes to pitching it and showing off how it works.

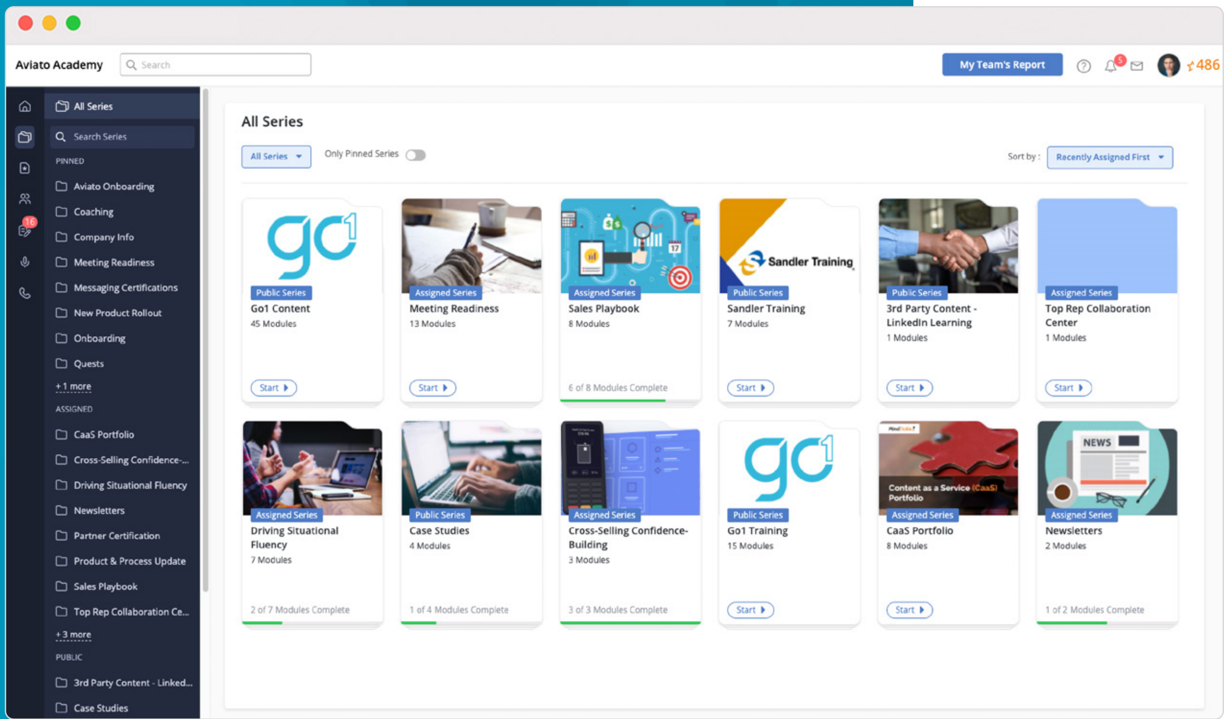
COMPETITOR KNOWLEDGE

Your competitors are bound to come up in sales conversations. When your reps are armed with competitive knowledge, it addresses buyer concerns and frames their pitch in a way so your product stands out.

After establishing what reps need to know, you can then use this as a framework for building out your training programs, on-demand learning sessions, virtual role-plays, and sales enablement resources.



3 Use content to help close deals



On average, only 47% of salespeople feel they are provided with relevant and effective content.

Yet, one of the most important ways to maintain alignment during the sales cycle is through knowledge sharing in the form of content. On the next page are the types of content you'd want to have available for reps to access to help them through the selling process.

PERSONA-BASED RESOURCES

We know that a CEO's concerns will be different than that of an HR manager's, which is why sales messaging should be tailored to each one to address their unique concerns. By providing reps with content that empowers them to adjust their conversations for each unique persona, you'll have a lot more consistency in your messaging – and more success too.

COMMON BUYER OBJECTIONS

As we mentioned in the last section of this guide, objection handling is an extremely important skill for a rep to master, and is typically one that comes with a lot of time and practice. As marketing and sales enablement uncover the common buyer objections reps face, it helps to have resources in place that address common objections and how to approach them.

CASE STUDIES AND OTHER CUSTOMER STORIES

Buyers love seeing examples and results from others who are in their shoes. Equip your reps with customer-centric content that focuses on common pain points and key results.

PRODUCT-FOCUSED MATERIALS

Give your reps the resources they need to show off your product and demonstrate exactly how it aligns with buyers' needs. This content can include datasheets, one-pagers, and bottom-of-funnel product videos that dig deeper into details and features.

BEST PRACTICES CONTENT

Help position your reps as experts in your space by providing them with blog posts and guides that address best practices, how-tos, and must-knows for buyers in your industry.

ONBOARDING INFORMATION

People are always curious (and sometimes apprehensive) about what comes next during the sales cycle. Have your sellers proactively address all questions and concerns by sharing onboarding content to give your buyers an idea of what's to come during implementation.

When it comes to using content to help close deals, make sure there's an open dialogue between your field reps and sales enablement. Since reps are the ones on the front lines, they know exactly what kind of content is needed at each stage of the sales cycle based on the questions buyers are asking.

4 Gather sales insights

Gaining visibility into reps' interactions with prospects and customers is sometimes easier said than done. As a sales manager, you want to be able to provide support for your team, but it's impossible to be on every call or debrief every conversation.

Instead, sales leaders should be looking at key sales capability metrics.

The true measure of a rep's readiness is a combination of:

1. How they behave and perform while learning and
2. How they behave and perform while interacting with customers in the field

Sales readiness platforms combine these insights to identify where knowledge and skill gaps lie for each rep or team. These insights help sales leaders uplevel reps through bespoke coaching and enablement strategies.

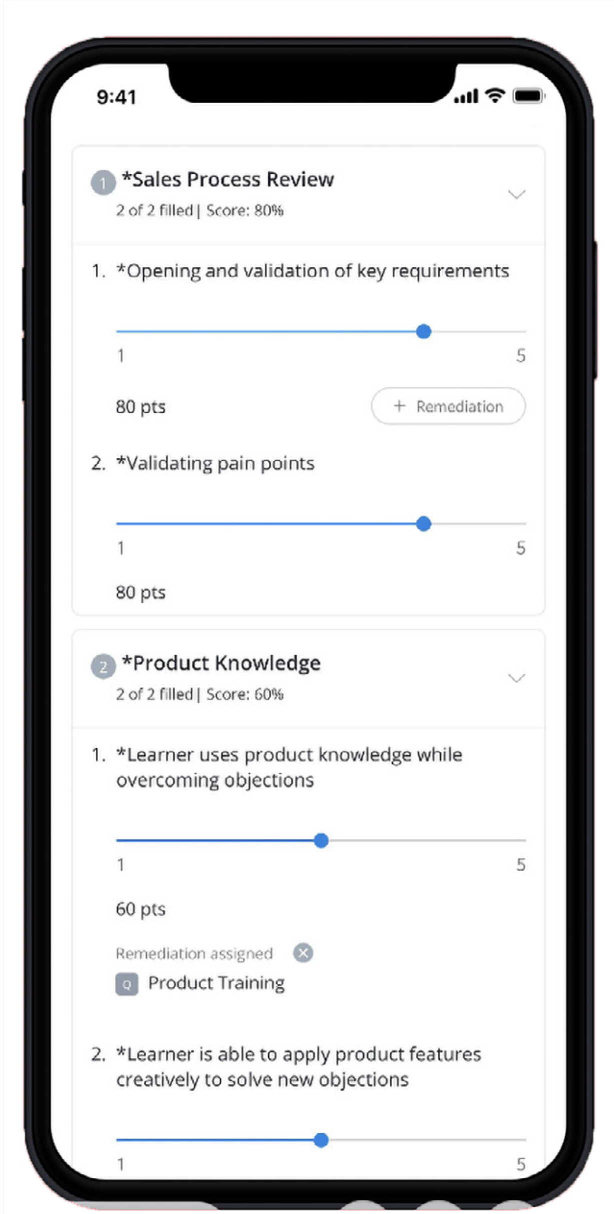
Provided you’re using a sales readiness platform, all of these activities can typically be easily tracked and recorded with no extra effort on your end. Each of these metrics will give you insight into how your team is performing and where there’s room for improvement.

5 Having more effective coaching conversations

The key to having more effective coaching conversations is having the data back them up. Evaluating performance isn't always easy – especially if there are areas for improvement.

Research shows that 45% of managers say they spend 30-60 minutes individually coaching sales reps each week.

Being able to reference actual metrics, rather than anecdotal feedback or opinions, simultaneously makes you a better coach and gives the rep more context around your recommendations.



Below we've highlighted some of the areas to examine (and how to evaluate them) to ensure the effectiveness of sales coaching conversations.

PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

Product knowledge is probably one of the most important criteria to evaluate reps. If they're not confident in their understanding of your solution, how can they explain it to your prospects?

You can assess and certify sellers on their product knowledge with quizzes, checklists and written tests. Reps can also be assigned virtual role-plays to see if they can demo the product, describe what it does and accurately express its value. If you're using sales readiness software, you can review and score this using artificial intelligence (AI).

SELLING BEHAVIOR

The way reps speak to prospects makes a big difference in how the information they're sharing is received. You want them to sound knowledgeable and confident – as well as professional. Using AI, you can evaluate how articulate and enthusiastic a rep is on a call, voicemail or presentation – as well as their tone. This includes tracking how many filler words like "um" or "uh" are used.

SELLING SKILLS

Tracking sellers' progress in real-time empowers sales managers to get data on each rep's ability to demo, use a sales methodology (e.g. MEDDPIC), challenge competition, handle objections and evaluate whether or message the product correctly. Having this data in real-time also gauges how likely a deal is to move forward.

MESSAGE CONSISTENCY

Using AI-powered keyword analysis, sales leaders can gain better insight into individual competencies and needs based on live interactions during the sales process. Analyzing sales calls gives you insight into why deals don't close and start coaching your reps on common questions reps are asked.

TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

Understanding how well your reps use sales tools like Outreach, Zoom and Salesforce allows you to see how effectively they're being put into action and you can then coach sellers about how to use them accordingly.

If your team is using a sales readiness platform, reps can actually record themselves in the tools, which can then be evaluated and scored. This gives you concrete talking points when it comes to coaching.

COMPETITIVE KNOWLEDGE

Using quick updates or instructor-led training sessions followed by quizzes, you can evaluate how well your reps understand the competition and if they need to brush up on their knowledge.

SALES PROCESS

It's helpful to see how familiar your reps are with your organization's sales process, including what they're expected to do at each stage. With a sales readiness platform, you can have this information available as an on-demand resource, then use virtual role-plays to evaluate your team's understanding. If you spot any gaps in knowledge, you can address those with the individual reps directly.

Selling secrets revealed

You're probably familiar with the old adage, "The best time to start was yesterday, the second best time to start is now." This applies to the strategies you're using to evaluate sales performance at your organization too. By tackling the steps we've outlined in this guide – even one at a time – you're going to start seeing results.

Here's a quick summary of what we've covered (and your next steps as a sales leader):

1. Determine the skills and qualities your ideal sales rep possesses, then use that profile as a blueprint for hiring and training other reps.
2. Figure out what you need your sellers to know, then use training modules and sales enablement resources to distill this information to your reps.
3. Create a sales enablement content library that will help your sellers through the sales process. This is especially important for remote sellers!
4. Track and record key sales capability metrics and use them to gain insight into how your team is performing – and where there's room for improvement.
5. When heading into sales coaching conversations, use data to identify where your reps can improve and provide feedback accordingly.

All that's left to do now is start putting these plans into action. Happy strategizing!