

Best Practices in Sales Training

Lessons from Industry Leaders

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INTRODUCTION

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This report identifies best practices in sales training by examining the training programs of eight companies: Avon, BellSouth, Canon USA, Century 21, Cingular, Gallo, Saab, and Wyeth. Each company selected for the report met these criteria:

- A leader in their industry
- Demonstrates success in sales
- Links sales training to sales performance
- Uses e-learning to deliver some portion of their sales training

The report profiles companies with substantial differences. The companies are from different industries. They use different distribution methods, and they sell different types of products and services. By analyzing the sales training methods used in such different companies, we were able to find the methods most likely to work for all companies. By reading this report, you will discover the most popular and effective sales training methods. You will find valuable insights that will help you use e-learning effectively in your sales training programs. By reading this report, you will also learn how each company:

- Achieved results
- Reacted to business needs
- Planned and implemented new sales training programs

ABOUT THIS REPORT

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WHY SHOULD I READ THIS REPORT?

There are several things to learn from this report:

- Chief learning officers can see how these companies link sales training to business objectives and review the business and training measures.
- Training managers can get real world examples of how leading companies plan and execute a sales training program, including working with organizations, selecting vendors, managing the team, creating blended learning, and delivering results.
- HR managers can see how these companies got real business results by providing an integrated program of training performance support and management supervision.
- Sales managers can find new ways to structure their sales training to get the results they want.
- Vendors can get a deeper understanding of the needs of sales training managers and see the real-world reasons they often have for selecting one vendor over another.

WHY THIS REPORT?

Our industry is filled with claims and case studies. Yet, we have found very little substance in most case studies, so it made us wonder how much trust we could put into these claims. We wanted to dig deeper to get a more complete understanding of particular problems. We wanted to know why companies launched new sales training programs. What alternatives did they consider? How did they design and implement their new programs? And, of course, we wanted to know what they achieved. In this report, you will see in-depth coverage. Our goal is to provide enough depth so you can get valuable insights to use in your own sales training program.

METHODOLOGY

In the Fall 2003, we invited readers of the brandon-hall.com *Dispatch* newsletter, members of brandon-hall.com online discussion groups, VNU newsletter readers, and members of several training and development discussion groups to nominate companies with the best sales training programs.

We reviewed the nominations and selected companies that met these criteria:

- A leader in their industry
- Demonstrates success in sales
- Links sales training to sales performance
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We wanted to study a diverse set of companies, so we selected companies from different industries. We then narrowed the list by selecting companies who had just completed measurements of their new sales training programs.

We interviewed senior training managers from each company for several hours. We asked them the same set of questions. We reviewed our notes and draft reports with them. We then wrote a final report on each company and summarized our findings.