



THE LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT GUIDE TO SALES MANAGEMENT TRAINING

A Resource for L&D Professionals

INTRODUCTION

There has never been a more dynamic time for L&D professionals. In addition to the ever-present challenges of identifying the right training content, building an elegant program, deploying it flawlessly, and measuring its impact, we now encounter an overwhelming array of enabling technologies and the need for global standardization. While many could characterize this collision of challenges as ‘exciting’ or ‘inspiring,’ we view it quite frankly as... well... daunting.

Then add to *that* the fact that we focus our attention on the target population of sales management. We find this group of adult learners to be particularly immune to our traditional bag of tricks – partly because they suffer from repetitive training fatigue, and partly because they refuse to divert any attention from their Internet-enabled devices. Yet, our research and experience tells us that sales management is the greatest point of leverage for boosting sales results. Sales managers are just a little... challenging.

That’s why we have created this *L&D Guide to Sales Management Training*, which compiles several articles written by our own L&D professionals.

We’ve had the good fortune to learn from many of our own mistakes over the years. We’ve been *genuinely* fortunate to learn from many L&D masterminds in collaboration with clients like GE, 3M, Tyco, Aon, Abbott, and others. We feel compelled to share our perspectives on these challenges and how we’ve seen them overcome.

In the following pages you’ll find ideas and best practices that have helped us become better at our craft. Hopefully you will also find them insightful and useful in improving your own training efforts. If so, there’s more where this came from. Visit our website to learn more about Vantage Point and how we help our clients identify, build, deploy, and measure global sales management training at the very highest level. Until then, enjoy the E-Book!

Best wishes,

The Vantage Point Team

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When leaders stay for the training, they are able to drive and reinforce behavior change, reaping the intended benefits of the training. When they don't stay, managers tend to fall back to their old ways of doing things, leaders fall back to asking the wrong questions, and the training rarely produces the promised results.

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SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

by Michelle Vazzana

www.VantagePointPerformance.com

In any sales manager training program, the opening moments of Day One typically include a welcoming speech by the second-line leader. Most leaders think carefully about what to say to motivate their management team to pay attention and absorb the training material, but the speech itself is not what matters. What matters most in training is what happens immediately following the speech: does the leader stay or does the leader go?

On the surface it seems like such a simple choice: walk out the door or remain in the room. But it is the choice that makes or breaks training effectiveness. When leaders stay for the training, they are able to drive and reinforce behavior change, reaping the intended benefits of the training. When they don't stay, managers tend to fall back to their old ways of doing things, leaders fall back to asking the wrong questions, and the training rarely produces the promised results. We see it time and again.

Why do second-line leaders need to attend the training when they feel they already have a conceptual understanding of the concepts to be trained?

It's the difference between reading a book about fitness and getting out to exercise. One will give you knowledge; the other will actually make you fit. A conceptual understanding of training content doesn't give second-line leaders the detail and tools they need to ensure training sticks and is applied—and to make changes in their own behavior and management approach.

For example, one of the problems common to sales organizations is that leaders of sales managers tend to have a short-term results focus. Since sales managers will focus on whatever their VP is focused on, a short-term focus by the VP tends to lead to a short-term focus by managers. In turn, this can lead to some neglect of longer-term coaching and development, long-term pipeline improvement and other activities with downstream benefits.

If sales managers participate in training that helps them more effectively balance short-, mid-, and long-term demands but leaders don't get that same training, they are unlikely to re-shape their focus and associated inspection more equally around that full range of performance. Which means leaders will continue to focus

on the short term, asking questions that impede the ability of the sales manager to implement the practices learned in the training.

When second-line leaders participate in sales manager training, they get the details they need to make changes in their own behavior and the results are consistently excellent. One case in point was our work with the financial services arm of a multi-billion dollar global corporation that was experiencing bloated sales pipelines, inaccurate forecasting and declining win rates.

In an effort to solve these problems, the company put its sales management team through five different training courses (some of the most popular in the marketplace), none of which produced any lift in performance—and none of which included the second-line leaders. When Vantage Point was called in to assess the situation and produce a program to address the problems, we urged the involvement of second-line leaders. They listened. Leadership stayed involved from start to finish and within 18 months, the group's win rate more than doubled to 54%.

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This is not an isolated case. We see the linkage between leadership participation and training results over and over. Still, it's not just a matter of being present and engaged during the class that makes the difference. In addition to attending training, there are a couple high-impact activities second-line leaders should do before and after the training to produce a post-training performance improvement:

Before. Sales managers need to understand why they are going through training long before that training takes place. In the weeks prior to training, all levels of leadership need to communicate to managers what they will be learning, why, how their lives will differ after training and the anticipated results. This ensures managers approach the training with the right mindset and attitude.

After. Behavior change is all about accountability. If, for instance, sales managers need to have better coaching conversations, second-line leaders need to show them how to do that and then hold managers accountable for implementing it. But who is holding the second-line leaders accountable for reinforcing the behavior change? We urge companies to appoint internal champions of

change, a team of second-line leaders who meet at regular intervals to discuss the rhythms of coaching, the types of coaching that are working and not working and so on. This joint accountability helps ensure that second-line leaders make necessary adjustments in their own behavior, dramatically improving adoption and execution of improved management practices.

On a final note, it's important to emphasize that second-line leadership participation in training not only creates results, it creates improved relationships between sales managers and their bosses. When a sales manager's only interactions with his boss are around forecasts and near-term numbers, there tends to be friction and tension around that relationship. However, when the leader begins helping managers think about how they can better manage their teams and how to solve problems, the manager-VP relationship becomes more valuable to the manager. When you couple these improved relationships with improved sales results, it's easy to see why second-line leadership participation in sales manager training is so critically important and valuable.



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HOW TO LOOK LIKE A ROCK STAR IN THE C-SUITE: 5 Principles for ROI Stardom When Training Sales Managers

by Lisa Wicklman

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As a learning professional charged with training sales managers, your mission is to deliver great training and then show the ROI of that training to the C-suite. But let's face it: sometimes that's a tall order. Depending on the type of training you choose, it can be difficult to cleanly connect the dots from your content to follow-on sales performance. And when that connection is weak, it can keep you from looking your best in front of senior leadership.

What if, instead of struggling for ROI, you could consistently wow the room with a clear link between your training and strong business results aligned with company strategy? What if you could look like a rock star every time you stood in front of senior leaders, making you an indispensable part of your company's future? You can. When you follow the five principles below, you will be able to draw a straight line from your training to the movement of key metrics to improved company performance—every time—and the C-suite will at last see you as the rock star that you are.

Principle #1: Stay aligned with business needs. Every great ROI story begins with an L&D professional who is positioned, either formally or informally, as a partner in the business. The only way to stay abreast of what's important to the senior leadership team today is to engage in regular business conversations with them.

How? Think like a business partner. What are the company's key strategies? Which 3-5 sales metrics will senior leadership be watching carefully over the next six months? Is the company planning to move into any new markets? Do leaders want a push for increased sales of a certain product in which they have invested heavily? When you know the answer to questions such as these, you are starting down the right path to equipping the sales managers with the code for increasing productivity from their sales teams.

Principle #2: Pick the right content. This may seem like a no-brainer but it is surprising how often L&D professionals choose "soft" general content such as "leadership"

or "coaching" that is difficult, if not impossible, to later connect to sales results. Your aim for the sales manager population should be to train them on the framework that leads to improved business results. When you do that, your ROI story will fall right into place.

This is a story of effectiveness and efficiency in training—of teaching managers to fish vs. simply giving them a fish. Depending on the sales team's goals and objectives, sales managers must determine the high-impact activities reps should be taking every day to move forward and how best to enable reps to execute those activities. When you as the L&D lead clearly understand the metrics the business needs to move and you help sales managers with training content to chart a path to move those metrics, demonstration of ROI through pre- and post-training results is a snap.

Principle #3: Incorporate current research. To paraphrase George Orwell, all content is not created equal. Even if you clearly understand the metrics that need to move and you identify the type of training content you need in order to move the needle on

those numbers, you must take a hard look at all your content options to ensure the one you choose leverages the most current empirical research. If it doesn't, it will degrade the effectiveness of the training—and negatively impact your rock star reputation.

As you evaluate different content options, ask yourself: Is this content rooted in solid research? Is that research directly relevant to sales managers? Is it recent? Does it incorporate the latest best practices? You'll know you have found the right content when the answer to all these questions is a resounding “yes.”

Principle #4: Know your audience. You understand the company's strategic direction and the critical sales metrics that will enable execution of the strategy. You've got the right content, supported by the latest research and best practices, to train sales managers to move those metrics. Still, all that groundwork will be for naught if your audience can't operationalize the content because you haven't adjusted it to account for the reality of their lives.

Sales managers are a hyper-busy and incredibly stressed group of people. The demands on their schedules and the pressure to grow sales are huge. This means that any content you train must be easy to digest, very practical and easily inserted into their daily routines. It also must be obvious from the outset how the training will help them produce improved results in areas that help them hit their sales goals.

Otherwise, they won't absorb and apply it—and you won't see the right numbers move in the right direction.

Principle #5: Leverage existing sales tools. To amplify your rock star persona, consider ways you can leverage your company's prior investments in sales enablement tools when planning training. CRM is usually a big hot button here. Countless organizations express frustration that despite investing tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in a CRM system, that system gets little use by sales managers and reps, thereby making it impossible to pull out reliable forecasts, status reports and other promised benefits of the technology.

If your training not only improves key metrics but also motivates the sales team to start using and gaining value from a technology investment such as a CRM system, the board room will see you as more than a star—you'll be a hero.



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International training has its challenges, but these can be overcome with planning and forethought.

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5 BEST PRACTICES LEARNED WHILE TRAINING IN 15 COUNTRIES

by Trish Derman

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Making the leap to become an international training company can be a daunting task, but it also can be a fruitful one. Corporate training represents a \$70 billion market in the United States, but the global training market is more than \$130 billion, according to the [2014 Corporate Learning Factbook](#). With so many opportunities available abroad, even a small piece of the training pie can prove valuable for U.S.-based training companies looking to expand.

Vantage Point Performance, a global sales management training and development firm, has been delivering sales management training overseas from its inception. These days, approximately 50 percent of our business comes from large corporate clients based overseas. Our U.S.-based staff and a growing cadre of international facilitators recently have presented programs in seven languages in 15 countries in places as far afield as China, Australia, and Saudi Arabia. Along the way, we've learned a few things, including the following five best practices:

1. Question your assumptions.

While it might be possible to offer your training program as is in another country, it is more likely that you will have to adjust the starting point to accommodate your participants' level of knowledge. This might mean you have to start with background information not normally included in your content to lay a foundation for participants who might not be familiar with the content, but it also might mean you have to skip the basics and start at a more advanced level for participants who already have mastered the basics. The only way to know for sure is to do a survey of participant knowledge before you develop the training.

We found that many companies around the globe are ahead of their U.S. counterparts when it comes to sales manager training. While U.S. companies are beginning to realize the pivotal role sales managers play in company success, forward-thinking companies abroad have placed a higher value on sales managers for much longer.

Where we normally have to spend time convincing companies in the U.S. of the importance of sales management, much of our international training *begins* with this assumption. So word to the wise—don't assume your starting point will be the same in every country.

2. Understand that language barriers are not all equal.

When you provide training in a foreign country, language is often an obstacle, but how much of an obstacle is important to determine. Language services are costly, so it is important not to over-invest in these services when they are not needed, but you want to ensure your team is equipped to translate materials, understand cultural differences, and communicate effectively. We anticipated something of a language barrier when we were training sales managers and second-line executives from East Asian countries. We were prepared with all of the necessary translation services, but most of the services proved to be unnecessary as the executives all spoke English very well. However, if we

were training front-line salespeople instead of executives, we likely would have found a larger language barrier, as fewer of the front-line salespeople understood English at the level needed for training.

3. Learn the language of time.

A principal difference we've noticed while training in countries around the globe is the length of the workday. If your training is built for an 8 a.m.-5 p.m. schedule with a 45-minute lunch, and two 15-minute breaks, you may find a misalignment with the local clock when you are training outside of the U.S. Data from the [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) reveal that countries such as Mexico, Korea, and Greece have some of the longest working hours, while the Netherlands, Germany, and Norway have the shortest workdays. When we train in countries with shorter workdays, we tend to start later, take longer breaks, and finish earlier than we do in the U.S. to accommodate local cultural norms. Anticipate extending your U.S.-based program by at least a day if you are training in a country with a relaxed atmosphere or shorter workdays.

4. Invest in trust.

Trust is always a key issue when it comes to training, but it matters even more when you are trying to build trust across geographical and cultural borders. One way to build trust is to schedule an introductory call to connect your client's executive team with your trainers. This allows your client to get to know your facilitators, and it also provides your facilitators with the opportunity to gather important information about the client. For example, you can use the interaction to ask about recent reorganizations, layoffs, or similar issues to help you understand the context for scenarios and role-playing. Showing this level of interest in your client and tailoring your training to meet their specific needs further develops trust.

5. Slow your rollout.

In the U.S., we often live by the idea that faster is better, but that is not always the case when it comes to rolling out training programs for companies with locations in various regions around the globe. Instead of rolling out programs at once, we typically launch pilot programs in key

regions and then roll out programs one region at a time.

This gives everyone a chance to assess the training and make changes as needed for future rollouts. While most of our clients engage us to help gain greater standardization in their sales management practices across a global footprint, there is still a level of customization needed to reflect local or regional differences. So don't be surprised if a "standard" rollout requires customization along the way.

International training has its challenges, but these can be overcome with planning and forethought. You also may find that your training capabilities improve over time as you gain a broader perspective that leads to new insights and a different point of view. Who knows? You may even learn as much as the participants you are training.

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The sales manager touches every large sales opportunity, every client and every sales rep. Yet for a number of reasons, most companies overlook this critical role when seeking to improve sales performance.

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FIREFIGHTER, RAINMAKER OR LEADER: Are Your Sales Managers Helping or Hurting Sales Performance?

by Scott Runkle

www.VantagePointPerformance.com

You've done everything right and still sales are lagging. You put in a new CRM system. You trained the sales team on the new selling process. You aligned the CRM system to support that process. You hired a couple new superstar reps. You've put a check in all the right boxes. The only thing missing is results. The question you should ask is: "Why? What have I missed?"

The answer probably lies with your sales managers. Most organizations have not trained their sales managers how to execute their jobs on a day-to-day basis. The sales manager touches every large sales opportunity, every key client and every sales rep. Yet, for a number of reasons, most organizations overlook this critical role when seeking to improve sales performance.

Lacking training on how to do their jobs well each day, most sales managers default to one of two management styles. Recognizing what style your managers use can help you better understand how training can make them more productive:

Firefighter. These managers jump to respond every time they are needed. They work 60-70 hours a week, are constantly putting out fires for their team and rarely, if ever, have time to talk. Their schedule, and their team's schedule, are often chaotic. Before being promoted, Firefighters were often top account managers ("farmers") who made their numbers by servicing their accounts. As a sales manager, they tend to try to duplicate that success by providing a high degree of service to their team. As a result, most of what they do is reactive. They run from one fire to the next but seldom provide strategic direction or guidance to the team as a whole.

Rainmaker. Rainmakers are usually former sales superstars who were promoted to manager based on their extraordinary success as reps, usually in closing large deals. As managers, they view it as their responsibility to ensure their team wins the big ones. Rainmakers often see themselves as the team's closer, jumping in for the big win after their reps have identified an opportunity. This is the classic case of "not all superstars make good coaches." Most notably, these

managers often do very little in the way of coaching and developing their reps. Sales results are often hit or miss, depending on whether or not they can close enough large deals.

Companies struggling to turn around sales performance usually have sales managers who fall into one of these two categories. When that's the case, it doesn't matter how much sales rep training you do or how many sales tools you put in place, sales performance will continue to bottleneck at the manager level as the manager is the conduit to consistently excellent results.

The good news is that there is a third type of manager—the strategic manager. A small number of managers fall naturally into this category, usually because they worked under a strategy oriented manager and duplicate that person's behaviors. In some rare cases, managers figure out on their own how to get there. Either way, these managers facilitate success because they have the following characteristics:

Leader. These are the sales managers everyone likes and respects.

FIREFIGHTER, RAINMAKER OR LEADER:

Are Your Sales Managers Helping or Hurting Sales Performance?

by Scott Runkle

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They seem to work a reasonable number of hours a week and come across as relaxed and comfortable, but somehow their teams consistently hit their numbers. Why? Because leaders are strategy driven managers who have a steady management rhythm that keeps them and their teams focused on the right activities. They utilize the right mix of coaching and are very good at developing their reps. Leaders usually grow a large percentage of their reps into high performers—and those high performers tend to remain at the company in order to continue working with the manager. In fact, many will go on to be top-performing managers in their own right if they learn from their manager's style.

So how do you turn Firefighters and Rainmakers into Leaders? You train them. Organizations that train their managers how to lead strategically usually see a dramatic turnaround in their sales results.

For instance, at Gates Corp., a leading global manufacturer of industrial automotive products, sales management training led to the sales force doubling its close rate while bringing new business won in line with

the company's strategic plan. At a technology solutions provider, Q3 sales came in 144% above quota after the company adopted a strategic management rhythm.

At the U.S. division of a global technology manufacturer, a sales excellence initiative aimed in large part at equipping sales managers for success led to:

- ◆ A sharp uptick in quarter-over-quarter results.
- ◆ The fourth quarter saw a 30% increase in sales over Q3.
- ◆ \$12 million in new orders above what its finance department had forecast.

If you could transform all your Firefighters and Rainmakers into Leaders, what would be the impact? How might your sales results be transformed if all your sales managers were following a strategic blueprint? If they all understood the roles they manage and the selling processes that affect those roles? And if they all understood how to develop reps, how to coach, and had each of their reps

focused on the activities that drive results? When we improve sales manager performance just 1%, we see an exponential impact in sales revenues.

Don't let the most critical role in your sales organization hurt your team's performance. Instead, train them on how to execute their management job on a day-to-day basis and you'll start seeing an immediate impact on your bottom line.



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Today, firms have come to recognize that sales managers do not come ready-made with the skills they need to be successful the moment they are promoted out of the sales rep ranks.

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TRAINING SALES MANAGERS WITHOUT TURNING THEM OFF

A Checklist for Finding the Right Facilitator

by Lisa Doyle

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Sales managers are one of the most influential drivers of a company's top-line revenue performance. Yet historically, organizations invested little in sales manager-specific training as leaders widely assumed that great sales reps would naturally have what it takes to be great managers of sales reps.

Today, firms have come to recognize that sales managers do not come ready-made with the skills they need to be successful the moment they are promoted out of the sales rep ranks. As a result, firms are beginning to invest in sales manager training. This trend is re-surfacing an age-old training question: Can a great facilitator work with any training participants? Or are there certain qualities to look for depending on the audience?

In most cases, a good facilitator can guide any group through a well-designed training program without having previously performed the jobs of the people in the room. For instance, a strong facilitator can bring out the best in a room of senior executives without having been a CEO. Or they can shepherd a finance department

through training without having any financial background.

To successfully train sales managers, a facilitator requires a unique background and skill set. What should you look for? Use the following checklist next time you plan training for your sales managers. By seeking a facilitator with these qualities, you will maximize your chances that the person at the front of the room has the credibility and skills to keep the attention of your busy, highly demanding sales managers as well as make sure the training hits home.

Sales management background.

Firsthand experience as a sales manager is at the top of the list of essential facilitator qualities. The sales management role is unique: It is tactical and strategic, it is high-pressured, it is carefully measured and it is very visible. If a facilitator doesn't demonstrate the deep understanding that comes from having done it themselves, they risk losing credibility.

This level of experience is not as important when training a softer skill like communication or time

management, but it is essential when leading training on sales management skills. A sales background alone won't cut it here; sales managers want to see a background in sales management. They want a facilitator who knows the pain points and the reality of the job so the teaching isn't just academic. Sure, every facilitator needs to present themselves as qualified, but for a sales management audience, this requirement moves up a notch in importance.

Ability to sell the training. Sales managers have so little free time and are measured so rigorously against the results they produce that before they can tune in to any training material, they need to be sold on its benefits in a dynamic and compelling way. They need to feel confident that the time they will spend in the classroom is going to help them get better results and will be worth taking time away from their crammed to-do lists.

A facilitator's sales background is helpful here. Not only does it establish credibility, but it enables them to "sell" the audience on the value of the training and what's in it for them.

A portfolio of examples to drive dialogue. One of the balancing acts every facilitator must master is when to pull answers from participants and when to teach content. This is particularly tricky when the audience is made up of sales managers as they tend to have limited patience with reflected questions such as, “How would you handle that?” A great facilitator with sales management experience can find the right balance by using personal examples as a bridge to soliciting participants’ reactions and creating dialogue focused on their learning process.

For instance, say a facilitator shares content about what a good coaching conversation sounds like and a participant responds with, “That won’t work. I can’t imagine saying that to my seller.” An excellent sales manager facilitator could respond with something like, “I thought the same thing when I first heard it. I can give you an example of how it worked for me when I was managing sellers. Before I share that, what reactions do others have to this idea?” The facilitator can then get input and feedback from others, creating genuine dialogue that will help determine where numerous participants are on the learning curve. The personal story the facilitator

shares becomes either a confirmation of something a participant shared or a more involved learning point, depending on the needs of the group.

A willingness to learn. A strong sales management training facilitator will understand the need to be thoroughly prepped about the selling environment they are walking into—and will be willing to do their homework ahead of time.

Facilitators for this demanding group need to understand what the sales cycle looks like, the structure of the selling organization, the competitive and market landscapes and many other elements that paint a full picture of the sales environment. This allows them to interject meaningful conversations movers like, “I understand your typical sales cycle is nine months. What does that mean for what we are talking about here?” If sales managers perceive you haven’t done your homework, they are likely to think: “You don’t know who we are! How can you possibly help us?”

In the end, sales manager training is all about the participants and the “aha!” moments need to come from them. That’s why the last item on our facilitator checklist is an ability to make

the class about the trainees and not about the facilitator and his/her experience: have a humble heart! A great facilitator of sales management training will bring up their background early on to establish credibility and will leverage it as necessary to provide examples and generate dialogue among participants. But then they’ll put their own expertise in the background and make the learning all about the audience.



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Plan ahead to sidestep the following hazards and you'll not only increase your chance of creating a powerful training program, you'll build strong and lasting connections with key stakeholders along the way.

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3 COMMON PITFALLS IN DEVELOPING A LARGE-SCALE TRAINING PROGRAM

How to Spot the Hazards and Avoid Falling In

by Lindsay Denisar

www.VantagePointPerformance.com

Your CEO has just announced a major shift in sales strategy. Now it's up to you, the L&D professional, to devise the training program that will give sales managers throughout your company the skills they need to execute the new strategy. Whether you are brand new to developing programs of this type or the task is old hat, you should be aware that there are three major pitfalls inherent in this effort. While they may appear to be basic, we see these problems a lot and, left unfixed, they can erode both training effectiveness and your relationships with key leaders.

Plan ahead to sidestep the following hazards and you'll not only increase your chance of creating a powerful training program, you'll build strong and lasting connections with key stakeholders along the way.

Pitfall #1: Weak planning. At the outset of a large-scale training project, it is common for project leaders to document their major deliverables and milestones so they have a roadmap by which to navigate through the project. The problem is that many plans stop there.

Lacking input from key stakeholders and failing to include the myriad smaller tasks that enable completion of the larger ones, these skeletal plans are often to blame for missed deadlines, pushed schedules, and misunderstandings among the project team.

Many of the common problems that crop up in large-scale training development can be headed off simply by taking the time to create a detailed project plan that includes all tasks (large and small), the timeline for their completion, and input from stakeholders who are vested in the outcome of the training. Plan creation can be done cooperatively in cases where stakeholders want to contribute their knowledge to development of the training program. Or you can send a draft to them for input when you've got stakeholders who prefer to be more hands-off. Either way works; the important thing is that it gets done, that it is comprehensive, and that everyone is bought into the plan.

Once approved, remember that the plan will change as the project moves

forward. Review the plan weekly to be sure it is always updated to reflect new information and changes. A good software program is helpful here as it will enable everyone to see what's going on and what the next steps are so a project stays on track.

Pitfall #2: Keeping stakeholders in the dark. When you've been assigned the task of creating a large-scale training program and you know exactly what needs to be done, it can be tempting to forge forward with your head down and door closed. We have seen many very competent L&D professionals dive into training development in a vacuum.

The problem: when stakeholders are left in the dark as to the status of the project, they tend to get worried about what's going on, frustrated by lack of information, and begin to lose confidence that the training team can complete the project.

Avoid this pitfall by planning ahead to nurture trust with stakeholders, SMEs, and company leaders throughout the project.

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How? Through regular communication. We recommend scheduling a weekly 30-minute call with all the key people invested in the training project to keep them apprised of the project and to provide a regular opportunity for them to ask questions and provide input. While you may not wind up using all 30 minutes each week—and there may be weeks you don't need the call at all—it is important to put it in the books and have a clear agenda for each call.

In addition to the weekly status update, communicate that you are available if questions ever arise during the week. And don't assume email is the best communication medium for everyone, even if you prefer it yourself. The weekly check-in is important to do by phone so people can ask questions they might not put in an email, but if someone works in the same building it's a good idea to meet occasionally face-to-face to build relationships. Admittedly, some stakeholders may not want a lot of communication, but it's important to offer it so no one ever feels in the dark.

Pitfall #3: Walking away after project completion. Closing a project is just as important as kicking it off yet all too often project managers finish a large training effort and then walk away to begin working on the next assignment. When a project is left without a strong conclusion, stakeholders never gain a sense of closure and, no matter how successful the training was, the program can feel unfinished.

To sidestep this trap, we recommend a wrap-up phone call with all key stakeholders to summarize how things went, report on the post-training evaluation findings, identify best practices that emerged, and simply celebrate the success of the training program. Sometimes, we find stakeholders have lingering questions about the training and the wrap-up call allows them to have those questions answered. In addition, new requirements can emerge in this conversation, such as the need for reinforcement of training.

Tying everything together at the end puts an exclamation mark on the end

of the sentence as well as cements the great relationship you established throughout the planning and training process.



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