

SALES TRAINING GOES DIGITAL WITH SCALE & COMMUNITY

A PLAYBOOK FOR THE
MODERN SALES FORCE



MANDEL

Make every communication count.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Speed is everything in sales. In a world of unprecedented disruption, companies are looking to transform and inform their sales organizations to compete and win quickly, simply, and often.

But sales executives and enablement professionals face a difficult and uphill battle to train their sales teams in constantly shifting conditions.

They need to quickly upskill and update all of their sellers on critical product, market, and brand information. Repeatedly.

SALES TRAINING DELIVERED IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT – DIGITAL SALES TRAINING – HAS EMERGED AS THAT COMPETITIVE EDGE FOR BUILDING AND KEEPING SALES TEAMS RELEVANT AND HIGH PERFORMING.

“When you have dynamic and cutting-edge products and services, you must have a way to train your global sales force with the same level of quality, speed and relevancy. Deploying sales training in the digital environment, especially when working with Mandel, gives sales organizations the opportunity to do just that.”


CHRIS PIRIE, CEO AT LEARNING FUTURES GROUP AND FORMER GENERAL MANAGER, WORLDWIDE READINESS AT MICROSOFT

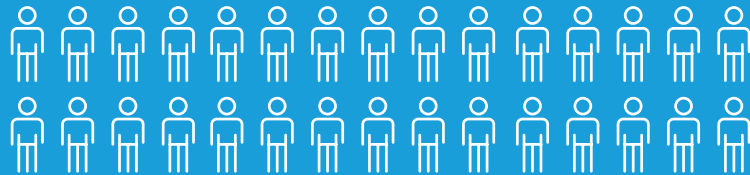
It's far beyond traditional online sales training programs and techniques. In fact, it's reinvented the enablement playbook. What for many companies started as a one-off solution to pandemic-related restrictions, Digital Sales Training is giving companies the ability to quickly ramp-up sellers, at scale, with outcomes equal to or exceeding what they experienced before.

While you read this playbook, imagine the possibilities your sales organization could achieve by applying the best practices and techniques shared. Check your readiness for adding digital to your sales enablement toolbox and consider adding Digital Sales Training to your next enablement event.

BY IMPLEMENTING SALES TRAINING DIGITALLY, COMPANIES CAN REACH ALL OF THEIR SELLERS SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE TOOLS AND INFORMATION THEY NEED TO GROW THE REVENUE LINE AND SUCCEED *RIGHT NOW*.

Outcomes powered by sales training delivered digitally:

 **50%** improvement in
converting a contact
to a meeting



- Higher win/loss ratio
- Improved pipeline for profitable growth
- Team collaboration focused on results
- Training takes just 3 to 4 weeks from concept to deploy



DIGITAL SALES TRAINING: TECHNOLOGY + DESIGN + COLLABORATION

The key to sales training effectiveness¹ — online or in person, now or after the pandemic — lies in a program's ability to impart a sales methodology that sales professionals can relate to and that can change their selling behaviors.

There is a time and place in every development strategy for in-person, virtual, hybrid, and e-learning – and now, Digital Sales Training. It's a must-have in the enablement playbook. Today's digital solutions are an ideal way to impart sales methodologies at scale, quickly. They create breakthrough experiences that have a quick and significant impact on sellers and organizations.

Digital Sales Training takes all the benefits from e-Learning; self-paced, any device, anytime learning; and adds a critical element: live and dynamic collaboration.

Sellers access the interactive online sales training platform at their own pace, using any device, for any period of time, within a **guided, community-based environment**. Sellers, working with sellers, talking to leaders, learning from SME's, all guided by a facilitator/coach.

It's this guidance and community-building focus that are key.

43%

Relationship-building isn't a trivial consideration. In fact, personal connections are more valued than ever. Forrester Research³ notes that “despite the move to virtual interactions, people crave deep, human connections.” A recent survey⁴ revealed that 43% of workers consider team building and collaboration as critical workplace aspects.

So, how can you optimize digital delivery of your sales training?



6 CRITICAL DESIGN ELEMENTS FOR DIGITAL SALES TRAINING

The guided digital training environment uniquely weaves in skillful design elements – videos from executives and sales leaders, discussion boards and chats, client-driven practices, peer-to-peer coaching, and more – to deliver the context and information that sellers need to be successful.



Set strategic context (**why now**)



Immerse the seller into their real world (**why me**)



Connect with what matters to them (**WIIFM**)



Get them talking and working with their peers (**how do we apply this**)



Promote relationships between and across sellers, managers, coaches, leaders, and executives (**we are in this together**)



And get them back into the marketplace using the new sales content quickly, relevantly, and impactfully (**call to action**)



IS DIGITAL RIGHT FOR YOUR SALES ORGANIZATION?

CHECK YOUR READINESS FOR DIGITAL SALES TRAINING

While all sales organizations can benefit from digital sales training, companies in these phases of growth find it especially beneficial.

■ Organizations with **frequent product and service releases**

- ☐ Rapid and frequent deployments – products, services, capabilities, sales plays, and competitive strategies
- ☐ Large-scale brand launches – sales kickoffs, bootcamps

■ **Hypergrowth** companies onboarding new sellers

- ☐ New in career
- ☐ Seasoned sellers learning new products, services, skills
- ☐ High-potential development programs

■ Companies living through **business transformation**

- ☐ Entering new markets with existing products
- ☐ Driving growth in existing markets with new products
- ☐ Defining and deploying Future of Work strategies

■ **Global** organizations needing to unify teams regionally and/or worldwide with respect for local norms and economic realities

- ☐ Mergers and acquisitions
- ☐ Regional expansion
- ☐ Aligning and building a connective culture across the organization

■ Organizations committed to building a **learning culture**

- ☐ Establish a consistent training cadence
- ☐ Provide opportunities for upskilling, reskilling, and peer-to-peer learning

The speed, scope, and quality of digital sales training can help organizations stay competitive even in the most challenging conditions.



CRACKING THE CODE – 5 SUCCESS FACTORS

1



**Personalization
at Scale**

2



**Sponsorship
& Leader Involvement**

3



**Culture and
Community-Building**

4



**Built-in
Competition**

5



**Smart
Data Analysis**

The digital sales training experience is far more than just innovative technology. The technology, married with purpose and design, creates a strategic tool delivering an ideal combination of sales strategy, product training, and essential soft skills development including communication skills. To think it's any less is a lost opportunity.

Today's state-of-the-art digital sales training features strategic customization that uses every opportunity to help sellers adopt and apply critical sales skills, tools, and product information.

**BY WEAVING THESE FIVE
ELEMENTS TOGETHER,
COMPANIES CAN DELIVER A
COMPELLING EXPERIENCE TO
THEIR SELLERS WITH LONG-
LASTING RESULTS.**



#1 PERSONALIZATION AT SCALE

One of the biggest challenges in any sales training is how to get salespeople to WANT to participate in training. Every minute a seller is in training is being weighed against a minute they could be selling.

The answer is easy — provide personal value. Create sales training that reflects the seller's specific selling environment, their challenges, and their opportunities.

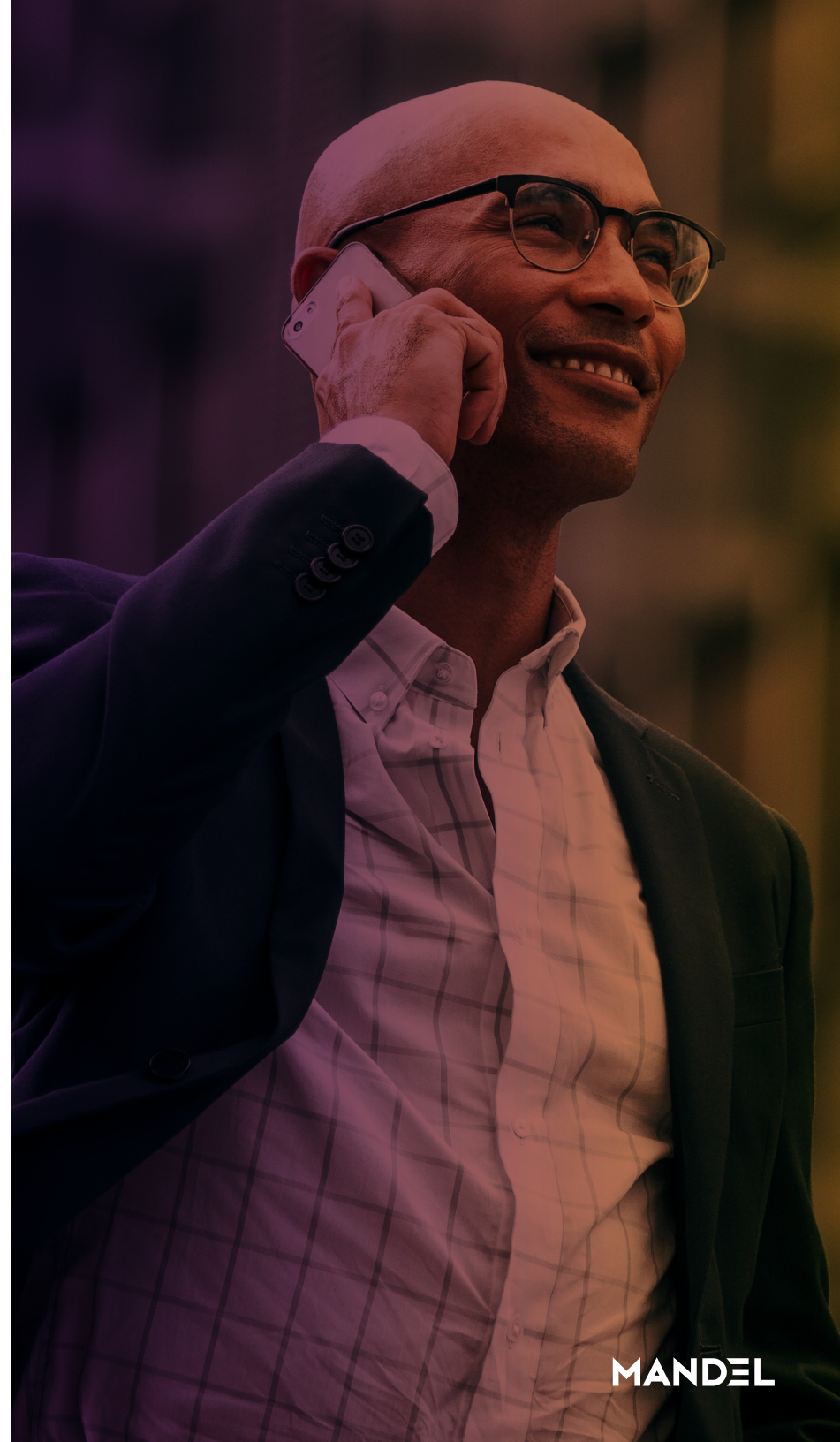
The digital environment gives sales leaders, enablement teams, and their training designers a multitude of options to make sales training relevant by product, region, and sales role.

Sellers have different knowledge and skill levels. They have different roles. They sit in different time zones. The training must address the company's specific work environments, individual situations, and personal preferences.

The investment will pay off. According to McKinsey, top B2B "outperformers" are 57 percent more likely to tailor their learning programs and 1.3 times more likely to outperform their peers in revenue growth.

“When you deploy sales training to thousands at a time, you run the risk of it feeling robotic and not relevant. The new digital training environment offers us ways to strategically tailor what we deliver to our organization and our individual reps — giving each seller, in each region around the world, a unique and highly relevant experience that translates to action quickly.”

GO-TO-MARKET MANAGER
FORTUNE 500 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & SERVICES COMPANY



The Digital Sales Training platform allows organizations to easily:



Craft messages from company executives and subject matter experts that are deeply relevant and personalized. Give sellers access to the top of the organization, and they'll stay engaged with the training. Their context setting will help sales reps take the training into their everyday actions.



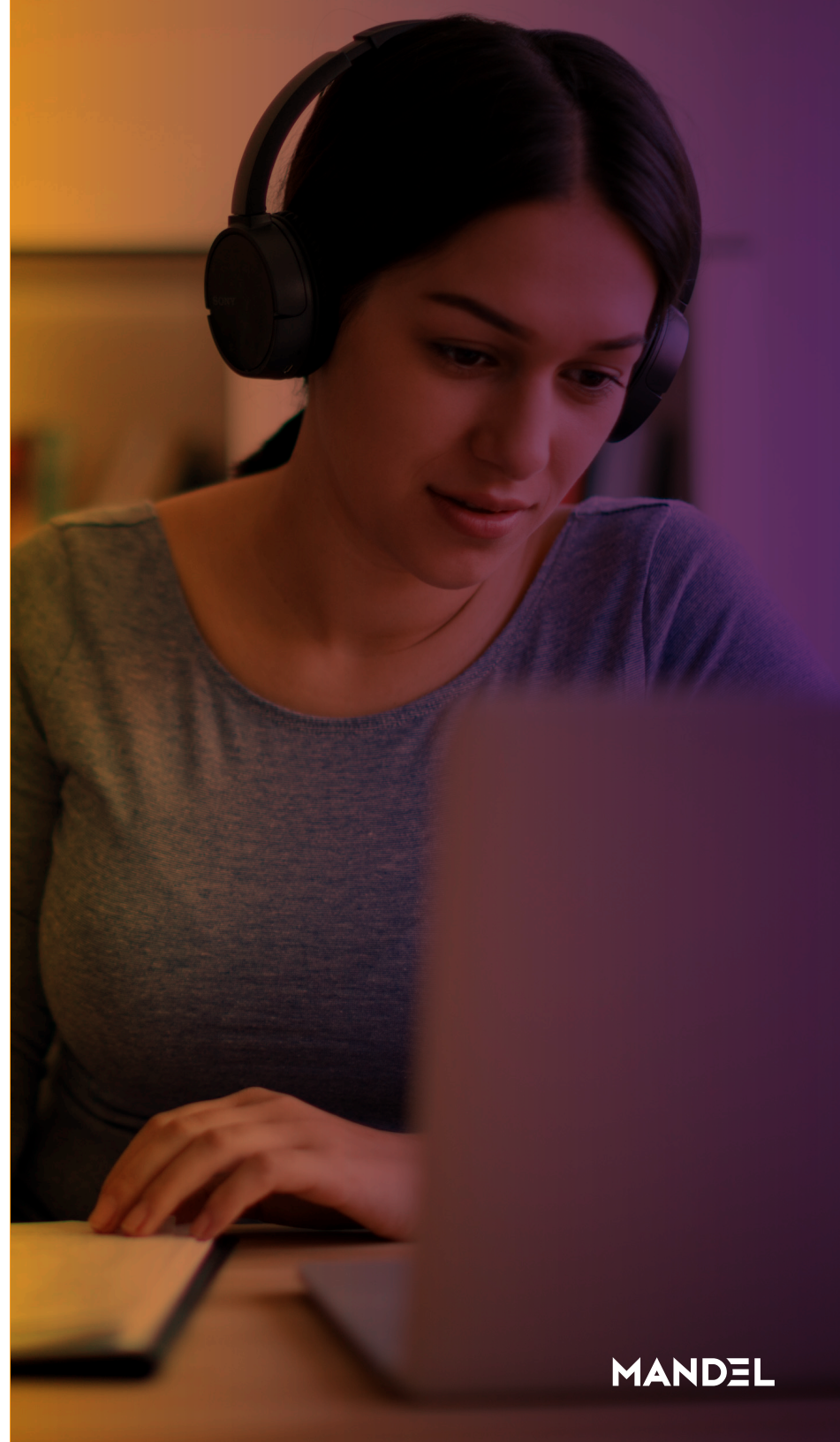
Use local scenarios, language, closed captioning, and business examples. These custom elements are easy to drop into a digital course, by Geo, and they accelerate the application and adoption of any sales training.



Create a familiar and distinctive look and feel. Make sure the digital environment reflects the sellers' world. Use company specific imagery, vernacular, and content, to enable sellers to see themselves in the training.



Address what's unique in each Geo. Using in-region facilitators creates a more even experience across geographies. A cohesive team of facilitators and coaches in multiple locations – such as New York, California, India, and Germany – can give different Geos what they need most. They can also deliver tools in the local language along with custom content and messaging.





#2 SPONSORSHIP & LEADER INVOLVEMENT

With remote work limiting the amount of face-time sellers can get with their leaders and managers, digital training environments deliver vital opportunities for visibility, coaching, and other productive discussions.

IT'S EASY TO UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPACT THAT A SENIOR LEADER CAN HAVE ON A SALES TRAINING INTERVENTION.

Before launch, they help define the business requirements and coalesce the organization's commitment to the initiative. By using video and other messaging inherent to the digital platform, leaders at all levels can connect directly with sellers.

Leaders are able to engage with more people on their teams in a digital setting than is typically feasible. They can learn a lot about the seller community and their culture quickly by engaging in these discussion boards – and those insights might be surprising.

67%

Remote work adds a layer of complexity to the sales manager's job. The LinkedIn 2021 State of Sales Report⁶, which surveyed more than 400 buyers and 400 sellers, found that two-thirds (67%) of sales managers say that overseeing a remote sales team is more challenging than they anticipated.

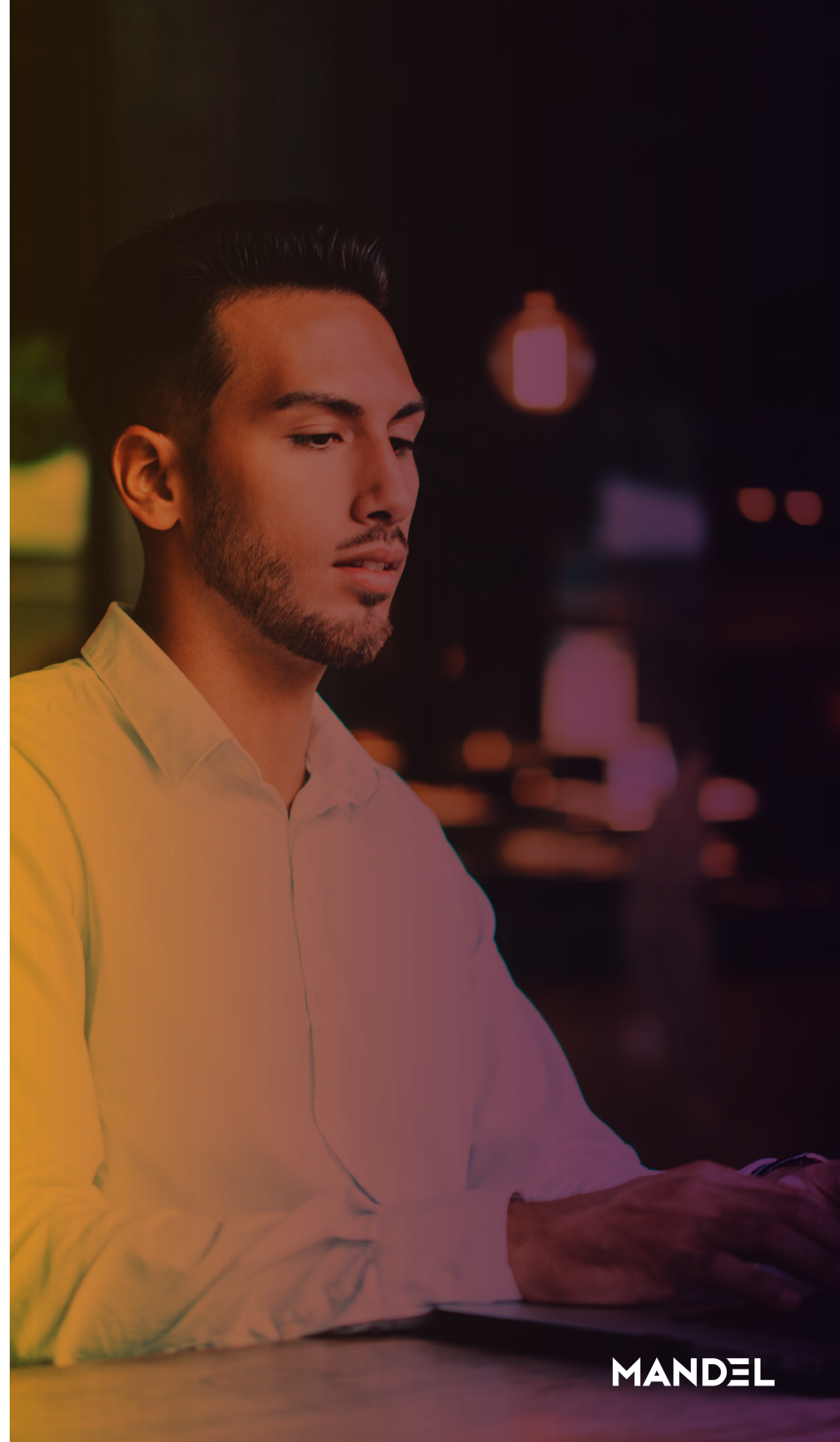
How Sales Leaders Show Up in Great Digital Sales Training

When Sales Training is delivered digitally, leaders can easily:

- Explain the “why” behind the training
- Set context
- Set call-to-action expectations
- Applaud progress
- Tell personal stories
- Engage in discussions with their sellers
- Share relevant and challenging scenarios
- Serve as judges

“Sales managers play a key role in coaching their sellers into being better salespeople every day. “When a sales rep brings a situation to their manager looking for some help on an approach with a customer, the manager can ask questions that follow a framework to elicit a more refined, precise, shortened communication that will be more effective.”

VP, FORTUNE 500 TECHNOLOGY COMPANY



#3 CULTURE AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING

To bridge the disconnects created by remote and hybrid workplaces, market leaders place a premium on building culture. Training initiatives become an important vehicle for unifying a global map of individuals.

According to Bersin's HR Predictions for 2022⁵, working in teams, leading, collaborating, communicating, storytelling, and thinking strategically are the most powerful and sustainable skills in business. Companies that foster these human-centered leadership skills create more cohesive cultures that can outperform their competitors.

There's something very powerful about having thousands of sellers from around the world, all experiencing the same sales training at one time. It builds a spirit of camaraderie and strategic cohesiveness.



Here are four unique and impactful techniques:



Shadowing and learning with other sellers. Learning in teams is critical if you want your sellers to immediately apply what they've learned in training. Designing opportunities for sellers to engage in peer coaching, group practice, and team projects can provide safe environments to practice and polish sales pitches and simulate customer interactions.



Peer coaching. Coaching and being coached provides both validation and essential practice. This is especially impactful when sellers are placed in relevant cohorts by region and role – then the exchanges of feedback, input, and recommendations become even richer.



Discussion boards. Being given the opportunity to discuss, challenge, and ask questions in any training setting is essential to adoption. Digital learning environments create the conditions for discussion boards to fulfill that need. Hundreds of participants can come together to collaborate, share strategies, and provide valuable feedback.



Leader access to their salespeople. Leaders, managers, sales enablement teams, and product developers can join the discussion to learn and spur more conversation about aspects of a new product, process, or strategy. It also gives them the opportunity to show that they care about the content and what the sellers think about it.





#4 BUILT-IN COMPETITION

Successful sellers tend to be naturally competitive, and that means they're intrinsically motivated to stay on top.

Embedding competitive elements can spark excitement across learners and keep people coming back.

It's no secret that, for sellers, practice is essential. If they can earn points for practicing their pitch, or even compete to win a "best pitch" award recognition from a sales leader, sellers tend to stay more engaged.

Dashboards and leaderboards that sellers and sales leadership can check anytime sparks the motivation to do well. And don't underestimate the power of a **badge or award** – these modes of recognition can be a fun opportunity for team building and really engage the learners.



DIGITAL TRAINING SNAPSHOT

Sellers in a Fortune 100 technology company completed their training initiative at their own pace. To up engagement, small groups of sellers formed cohorts and earned points for contributing to the experience. The discussion boards lit-up—with hundreds of participants sharing strategies, asking questions, and collaborating. More importantly, the sellers developed 10 new customized calls to action that were used right away.



#5 SMART DATA ANALYSIS

Data-driven approaches can give companies rich insights and intelligence on their sales strategies. Leading organizations are feeding targeted data gleaned from discussion boards, completion data, and chats into smart dashboards that measure progress against business priorities.

This analysis goes well beyond satisfaction scores for sales training and moves into the effectiveness of individual sales reps as well as their overall sales strategies. Analytics and AI reveal new insights, including:

- Outcome achievement
- Behavior change – skill / product knowledge adoption (or not - equally important)
- KPIs – sales, sales cycle length, repeat sales
- Retention of high performers

These types of insights can uncover hidden opportunities. They can also reveal obstacles that require intervention or course correction. Good data and effective analytics increase the likelihood of achieving sales targets and strategic goals.



We're still seeing the results and increased sales momentum a year later."

VP GLOBAL SALES, GLOBAL SECURITY INDUSTRY LEADER



DIGITAL TRAINING SNAPSHOT

A year after a new training initiative, a global security company analyzed the effectiveness of the training over time.

- **95% of sellers were still using the frameworks and tools on a day-to-day basis and/or in high stakes communications. The results added up to more than \$1 million in business**
- **ROI for wins and new opportunities was double the cost of the training**

POWERFUL PAYOFFS – 3 EXAMPLES

A LEADING STORAGE ORGANIZATION SPEEDS TIME TO MARKET WITH NEW OFFERINGS

A leading storage organization wanted to grow its multi-billion-dollar global pipeline. To do that, its sales force needed the product intelligence and communication skills to quickly leverage this unique market advantage.

THE ONLINE SALES BOOTCAMP FOR 2,500 REMOTE GLOBAL SELLERS TOOK 3 WEEKS FROM CONCEPT TO DELIVERY, AND RECORDED RESULTS WERE REALIZED IMMEDIATELY.

The training was so engaging and impactful, Geo leaders and sellers from around the world lobbied for additional rounds of the digital training.

RESULTS FROM SALES BOOTCAMP



completion rate:

87%



50%
pipeline
improvement



Higher
win/loss ratio

A GLOBAL CONSUMER PRODUCTS COMPANY BUILDS COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

A Fortune 100 global consumer brand delivered a digital experience to improve persuasion, communication, and collaboration across its U.S. distribution team. Geographically dispersed, with a range of experience and tenure, the participants learned, discussed, and practiced the messaging and skills together. It enabled and reinforced their culture of open communication, trust, and collaboration and has gelled the U.S. distribution team.

The behavior changes and overall sense of community that came out of the training improved performance of the distribution team during a time of change and was recognized throughout the organization.

BENEFITS FROM DIGITAL SALES TRAINING



Peer-to-Peer Learning:

It introduced and taught the practice of peer-to-peer mentoring. Individuals saw what they were good at and how they could help their colleagues, and they became trusting to learn from peers who excelled in other areas.



Coaching:

Managers and supervisors used the digital platform to get involved as coaches.



Engagement:

By investing in skills development, team morale, and buy-in improved.

FAST-GROWING TECH FIRM GAINS VISIBILITY INTO SALES SUCCESSES & ROADBLOCKS

A hypergrowth customer-experience management company needed to be sure its new hires were communicating on-target messaging to the market.

The training initiative focused on practice, with application exercises that matched what the sellers typically did on a day-to-day basis. Sellers got actionable feedback and learned how to tailor their messages so that they resonated with each customer's requirements.

The Gold Mine Of Online Discussion Boards

Honest feedback from your sellers can reveal important issues, but it can be difficult to get. When sellers log their comments in discussion boards, they can be mined and analyzed. Sales leadership gets a clearer window into their sales teams, so they can spot roadblocks early on.

Analyze by region or tenure. Pinpoint areas that need additional resources or support. Answer such questions as:

- **How** do reps in different regions expect a new product to perform?
- **How** engaged are our newer sales reps as they go through training?
- **What** issues are affecting our sales culture?



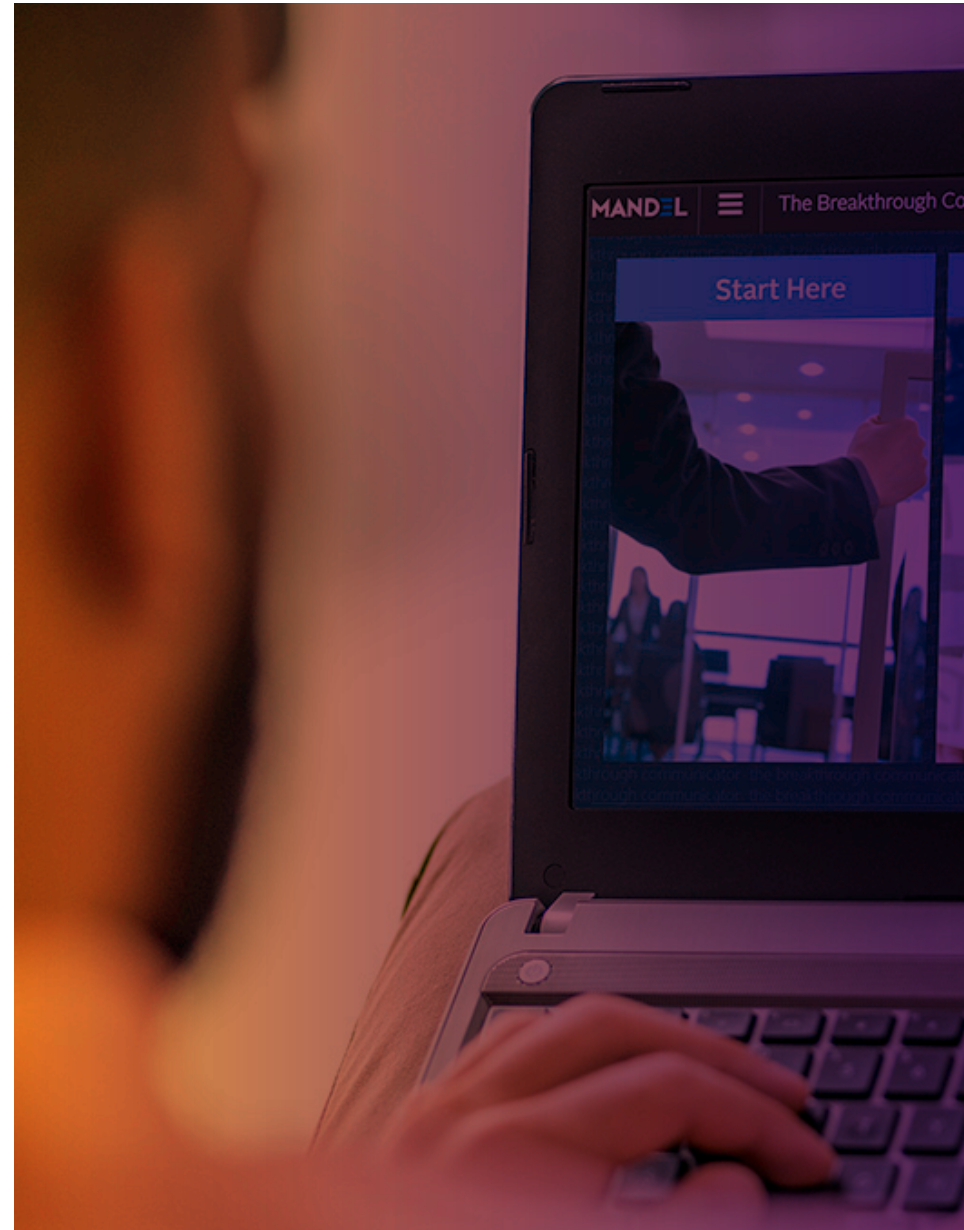
The company immediately saw a 50% improvement in the conversion rate of a contact to a meeting. Sellers said, **“it was because of this training that I got that meeting. I know it.”**

EQUIP SELLERS FOR TODAY'S DIGITAL WORLD

It's time to explore the full potential of a custom digital sales training engagement.

A digital approach to training can help sales executives and enablement professionals overcome some of their key challenges. Both hypergrowth and established companies have proven that this approach engages sellers in a meaningful way. Quickly, relevantly, and en masse. With exceptional outcomes.

WHEN SALES LEADERS HELP THEIR SELLERS ADOPT AND APPLY CRITICAL SALES SKILLS, TOOLS, AND PRODUCT INFORMATION THROUGH A DIGITAL TRAINING EXPERIENCE, THEIR WELL-TRAINED SALES FORCE CAN COMPETE AND WIN.



FOR ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

1. Client video. “Transforming the Communication Skills of Sales Forces”
2. Case Study. “Digital Boot Camp Unites Global Sales Team”
3. Client video. “How do Mandel’s skills and method help you drive sales results.”
4. Case study. “Global Leader Turns Sales Skills Into Deals”
5. Overview video. “Digital Sales Training That Works”

SOURCES

1. Seeley, Jeff, and Chris Lynch. “Online Sales Training Must Be More Than a Digital Learning Platform.” Training Industry, 2021.
2. Shea, Mary. “Today’s B2B Buyers Crave Digital Touches And Human Connection.” Forrester, 2020.
3. Cohen, Andy and Diane Hoskins. “Insights from Genlser’s US Work From Home Survey 2020.” Gensler, 2020.
4. Lister, Jonathan. “The LinkedIn Sales Report 2021.” LinkedIn, 2021
5. Josh Bersin, et. Al. “HR Predictions for 2022.” The Josh Bersin Company, 2021.





About the Author

DIANE BURGESS-FABER is SVP, Chief Learning & Design Strategist for Mandel Communications. Diane leads Mandel's Digital, Hybrid, and AI-driven Mobile learning strategies, which blend, reinforce, and complete Mandel's award winning in-person and virtual suite of training solutions. She's driven by the fundamental beliefs that learner experience comes first, behavior change is paramount, and learning should be social, collaborative, and seamlessly connected to "real work" using the most impactful methods and technologies.

About Mandel Communications

Mandel Communications helps Fortune 500 companies and hyper-growth firms improve innovation, strategic decision-making, project execution, and sales performance through more effective communication.

Contact us to explore how Mandel can rapidly transform your sales organization and improve your bottom-line business results.

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