

Online Content

How to Prep for a Great Sales Kickoff Meeting

A [sales kickoff](#) is a major investment of time and resources. But how do you know if your efforts are actually creating an aligned team that's ready to raise revenue?

Sales kickoffs are grounded in three main elements: education, engagement, and energy.

1. Education

To sell effectively, sales reps need to know what new products, strategic initiatives, and marketing messaging are coming down the pike. It's very easy for sales reps to miss out on this kind of information without frequent and routine communication. A sales kickoff meeting can be an ideal time to get them away from the phone, road, or computer and secure their undivided attention for product and skills training.

2. Engagement

A sales kickoff meeting is an opportunity to share best practices among the team or brainstorm about ways to increase sales by sharing common challenges and frustrations. Given the amount of time reps usually spend on their own, these exchanges can translate to knowledge-is-power experiences. When sales reps feel connected to their peers and the company, they're more likely to remain engaged to achieve common goals and commit to a shared vision of success.

3. Energy

To perform at their peak, sales reps need regular infusions of motivational energy. If you're doing your job, you've laid the groundwork for this in the form of a routine effort to help keep your team positive - even a simple email of thanks or congratulations can help keep a rep perking along during a tough week. A sales kickoff, however, is a chance to energize the team on a grand scale. Combine an awards ceremony and electrifying speaker with a large and enthusiastic crowd, and you'll have an energized sales team pumped up and primed to succeed in the year ahead.

If it's designed correctly, sales reps will leave a kickoff feeling valued, inspired, and confident. The downside to kickoffs? The education, engagement, and energy can wear off quickly. According to the Sales Executive Council, reps forget up to 87 percent of training content just one month out.

That doesn't mean you should ditch your kickoff plan, however. In fact, there are a few key things you can do to start getting more from your annual investment.

Ask sales reps what they want to learn. Usually, people are more invested in what they're learning when they've had a hand in shaping it. Involve the sales team in preplanning by asking team members what is most valuable to them. Find out before the event what their common frustrations are, and structure your agenda to address the challenges accordingly. Make time for breakout sessions among smaller groups to discuss these issues.

Hold a virtual kickoff. The obvious benefit of a virtual meeting is that it saves time and

expenses related to travel. The "virtual trade show" solution from ON24, for example, makes a kickoff meeting accessible from any computer (without having to download any software). Executed successfully, a virtual kickoff can replicate a live experience down to the last detail, including a virtual ballroom, high-def presentations, a product showcase (to educate reps on new-product demos, sales kits, and messaging), and a virtual lounge where attendees can network via message boards and chats. Another benefit? All the presentations can be made available for future use – you can make your sales kickoff event immediately accessible to new hires as you bring them aboard.

Reinforce your kickoff theme throughout the year. You worked hard to come up with a great theme for this event, so don't put it out to pasture once everyone heads home. Whenever you send an email, start a meeting, or get the team on a conference call, take a minute to highlight a recent story that illustrates the messaging from your sales kickoff – and make an explicit connection between the two. You can also create an award based on the theme of your sales kickoff and reward someone each month or quarter for achieving a set number of goals related to the theme.

Use these tips, and you'll get more from your annual sales kickoff meeting and ensure that your team stays on track to succeed in the long term.

– Selling Power Editors

To learn more about achieving success with sales kickoffs, register now for this free Webinar on September 25, "[Executing a Successful Sales Kickoff](#)."

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