



BENCHMARK REPORT

The Top-Performing Sales Organization

by Mike Schultz, John Doerr, & Mary Flaherty

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The Top-Performing Sales Organization: An Overview

Why the Top-Performing Sales Organization?

There's quite a bit of research on what sellers do to achieve top performance, but relatively little on what separates top-performing sales organizations from the rest. Indeed, there's no common definition of top performance, so it's not easy to isolate what the better-performing sales organizations do differently than the rest.

With our Top-Performing Sales Organization research, the team at The RAIN Group Center for Sales Research has worked to change this.

We have measured sales organizations across 75 factors in eight categories critical to sales organization success. With this data, we've categorized respondents into three groups: Elite Performers, Top Performers, and The Rest. In this report, we share the differences between these groups, and provide expert analyst insight and advice to help guide sales leader decision making.

When leaders know what top performance looks like and what top performance means, they can make stronger, more impactful decisions.

This is the purpose of our Top-Performing Sales Organization research: helping sales leaders take their sales organizations to new heights.

What's in This Report?

For this report we surveyed 472 sellers and executives, representing companies with sales forces ranging from 10 to 5,000-plus sellers. Respondents were located in the Americas, EMEA, and Asia-Pacific, and represented 26 industries (for full demographics, see page 28).

This report is broken down by the eight categories of RAIN Group's Sales Performance WheelSM, a framework we've used to guide sales performance consulting engagements for two decades.

In each section of the Sales Performance WheelSM, research participants ranked themselves on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the best. The ranking choices followed RAIN Group's Sales Organization Maturity ModelSM, a framework with a series of stages to guide organizations from where they are now in the Sales Performance WheelSM, to where they need to be, and the path they need to take to get there.

Maturity models allow organizations to benchmark their culture, methods, structures, processes or virtually anything (in this case, the categories of the Sales Performance WheelSM) against a set of external benchmarks. With the release of the Top-Performing Sales Organization, we have now established the benchmarks.

This report includes data and commentary on each section of the Sales Performance WheelSM.

The Sales Performance WheelSM

To establish and enhance sales success, sales leaders have to make a multitude of decisions across many different areas and drive a series of seller and manager behaviors. The list of possible initiatives sales leaders can undertake to drive sales success is quite long. Regardless, leaders must decide what needs to be done across categories to produce the best results.

The Sales Performance WheelSM categorizes the various influences on sales success into eight buckets. Based on over 70 years of sales research and behavioral science, the Sales Performance WheelSM provides a guide to help leaders analyze where they are now and where they need to be, and to make the decisions on how best to get there.

The Sales Performance WheelSM is the framework we used to analyze the Top-Performing Sales Organization research. This report is structured around the eight categories.



Executive Summary

7 Takeaways from The Top-Performing Sales Organization Benchmark Report

Authors
Mike Schultz, John Doerr,
& Mary Flaherty

The Top-Performing Sales Organization study yielded a trove of fascinating results. The following seven points stand out as highlights:

- 1. Elusive silver bullet:** While the results of this research were in many ways fascinating, we did not find a silver bullet—a single thing that an organization can do better to revolutionize sales results. We did, however, find that achieving the right mix across the 8 categories of the Sales Performance WheelSM is extremely important.

What any individual company needs to do to drive results depends on a thorough understanding of where they are now and where their gaps are compared to Top Performers.

- 2. Performance and win rates:** The differences in proposal win rate between performance groups were quite large—Elite Performers have a win rate of 73%, Top Performers 62%, and The Rest only 40%. For those looking to make the financial impact case of getting to the next level in their sales organization maturity, focus on win rate. Improving win rate has a tremendous impact on a company's sales results.

- 3. Driving maximum value:** We asked whether respondents agreed that "Our sales organization focuses on driving maximum value for the customer." Elite almost universally agreed (91%), as did the vast majority of Top Performers (81%). Only 61% of The Rest agreed. We also asked whether "Company leaders prioritize developing sellers to be as valuable as possible to the buyers." 83% of Elite and 66% of Top Performers agreed. Meanwhile, The Rest were at 39%.

The lack of focus on value in The Rest, which represented 80% of respondents, is startling. This data should serve as a wake-up call to leadership to make a change.

- 4. Huge skill and training gaps:** Sales training effectiveness is atrociously low in The Rest (only 14% extremely or very effective) compared to Elite Performers (51%) and Top Performers (30%). Top Performers are also 63% more likely to have excellent or good investment in sales training. Only 27% of The Rest have excellent or good investment.

Across skill areas, such as driving and winning sales opportunities, core and advanced consultative selling, filling the pipeline, driving account growth, and more, The Rest have significant skill deficits. In fact, only 3 in 10 of The Rest agree that sales managers have the skills they need to manage and coach sellers. This means that if you line up 10 sales managers, respondents believe seven of them wouldn't have the skills to do their jobs effectively.

- 5. Spotlight on enablement and process:** Sales and strategic account management processes, as well as sales methodology, at The Rest are quite immature. Only 25% of The Rest have even defined a shared sales methodology or approach compared to 33% of Top Performers. Increased maturity in these processes correlates to a number of important factors, such as win rates, ability to achieve premium pricing, ability to grow existing accounts, levels of sales motivation, and more.

- 6. Spotlight on strategic accounts:** It's five to seven times less expensive, and more profitable, to build additional business with existing accounts than it is to acquire new ones. The #1 factor with the greatest separation between Top Performers (61% agree/strongly agree) and The Rest (32%) is "Our sales organization is effective at maximizing sales to existing accounts." Based on our research, it appears that organizations that are effective at strategic account management and growth do, indeed, enjoy stronger business results than The Rest.

- 7. Leadership and change:** We studied both the leadership's prioritization of selling and sales force excellence, and the leadership's ability to execute. Both correlate significantly to top sales performance, with the Top and Elite Performers scoring much higher than The Rest. In fact, only 51% of The Rest agree that when leaders set a priority, it gets done, versus 69% of Top Performers. It's no surprise: the rigor and investment leadership allocates to sales performance makes a difference in results.

Top Performer Criteria

We considered the following when defining Top Performers:

- High win rates
- Meeting annual sales goals
- Whether or not sales goals were challenging
- Capturing maximum prices in line with value provided

The Top Performer group represented 20% of respondents.

Elite, Top Performers, and The Rest Defined

Our goal was to determine how the best sales organizations differ from the rest. This begs the question, “What defines ‘the best’ sales organizations?”

We analyzed the respondents in three groups: Elite Performers, Top Performers, and The Rest.

	Elite Performers top 7% of respondents	Top Performers top 20% of respondents	The Rest
Average Proposal Win Rate	50% or greater	40% or greater	Those who didn't meet the Elite or Top Performer criteria
Annual Revenue and Profitability	Increase year-to-year	N/A	
Organization Annual Sales Goal	Met	Same as Elite	
Organization Annual Sales Goal	Challenging <i>(Strongly Agree/Agree/Neutral)</i>	Same as Elite	
Pricing Strategy	Maximum prices in line with the value provided <i>(Strongly Agree/Agree)</i>	Maximum prices in line with the value provided <i>(Strongly Agree/Agree/Neutral)</i>	

Some wonder why we don't simply use organizations that meet or exceed annual sales goals as the primary performance criteria. In our discussions with research respondents, and in our field work, we have often found goal-setting to be arbitrary, and we have encountered many different goal-setting philosophies. Some set lower goals expecting to achieve them handily, seeking positive psychological and cultural effects. Others set higher goals expecting they might not hit them, but due to the Pygmalion Effect,¹ achieve better results overall. (For insight into which philosophy works better, see page 10.)

Our goal was to determine which sales organizations won sales more, were able to capture value-oriented pricing, met goals they believed were *challenging*, and achieved strong business results, such as revenue and profit growth.

What Didn't Matter

This report focuses on the difference between Top Performers and The Rest. It's worthwhile to note that Top Performers are represented in all geographies similarly to The Rest. While companies with 5,000 or more sellers are more likely to be in the upper echelons, Top Performers are represented in all annual sales brackets similar to The Rest, and while there are slight variations among industry groups, their performance, win rates, and scores across categories are similar.

¹ The core message of the Pygmalion Effect is that, once an expectation is set, people tend to act in ways that are consistent with that expectation—the greater the expectation, the greater sellers will perform.

On Win Rate and Top Performance

The average win rate for business quoted or proposed across all responses is 47%. Win rates for Elite, Top Performers, and The Rest are as follows:

Figure 1. Win/Loss Rates

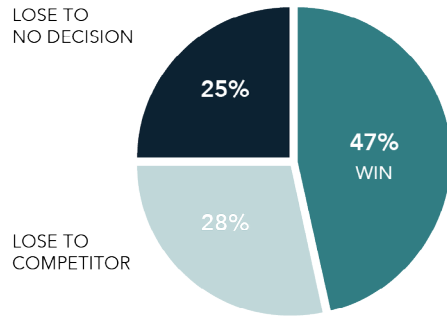
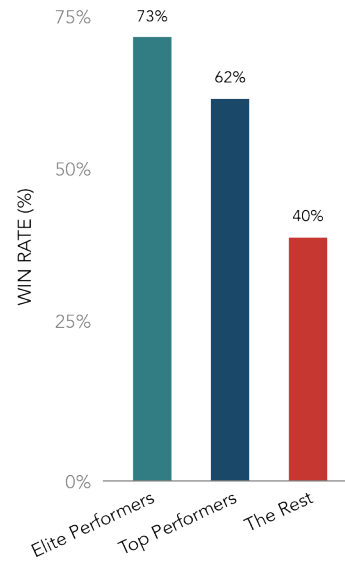


Figure 2. Top Performance and Win Rate



The differences between an average win rate of 40% for The Rest, 62% for Top Performers, and 73% for Elite is stark.

In each category of the Sales Performance WheelSM, we calculated the win rate of respondents who scored between 4.0 and 5.0 (the agree range) overall in the category, and those who scored between 3.0 and 3.9 (the neutral range). The differences, depending on the category, are between seven and 14 percentage points.

The importance of changes in win rate cannot be overstated.²

² For an analysis of the effect of win rate on sales performance, [click to read the white paper, Increase Win Rates and Beat Your Sales Goals.](#)

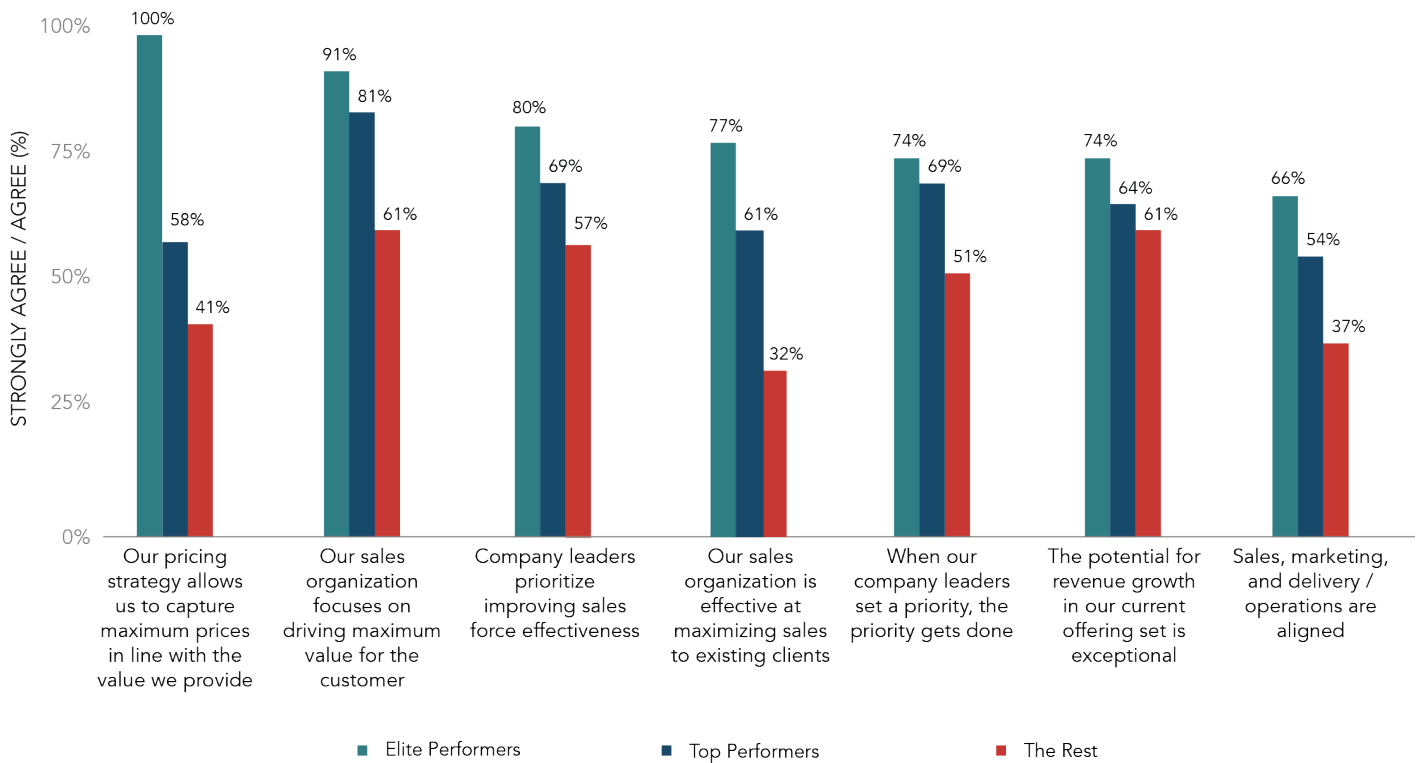


The Strategy category of the Sales Performance WheelSM focuses on the organization's overall go-to-market strategy and value proposition, along with the priorities, pricing strategy, and effectiveness of the leadership team.

The following responses in our study struck us as noteworthy regarding the differences between Elite, Top Performers, and The Rest.

Category	Overall Score	Average Win Rate
Strategy	4.0-5.0	53%
	3.0-3.9	46%

Figure 3. Strategy Factors by Sales Performance





Takeaways

Driving maximum value: We asked whether respondents agree that “Our sales organization focuses on driving maximum value for the customer.” Elite almost universally agree (91%), as do the vast majority of Top Performers (81%). Only 61% of The Rest agree. Becoming a Value-Driving Sales Organization does not happen by chance. It’s a proactive effort and priority of leadership.

Priorities: We studied both leadership’s prioritization of improving sales force effectiveness, and leadership’s ability to execute on priorities. Both correlate significantly to top sales performance, with the Top and Elite Performers scoring much higher than The Rest. It’s no surprise: the rigor and investment leadership allocates to sales performance makes a difference.

Strategic accounts: It’s five to seven times less expensive, and more profitable, to build additional business with existing accounts than it is to acquire new ones.³ Based on our research, it appears that organizations who are effective at strategic account management and growth do, indeed, enjoy stronger business results than the rest. Note that of 72 factors we studied, the greatest gap between Top Performers and The Rest is the answer to the question, “Our sales organization is effective at maximizing sales to existing clients.”

³ Sarabjit Singh Baveja, Sharad Rastogi, & Chris Zook, “The Value of Online Customer Loyalty and How You Can Capture It,” Bain & Company, April 2000.

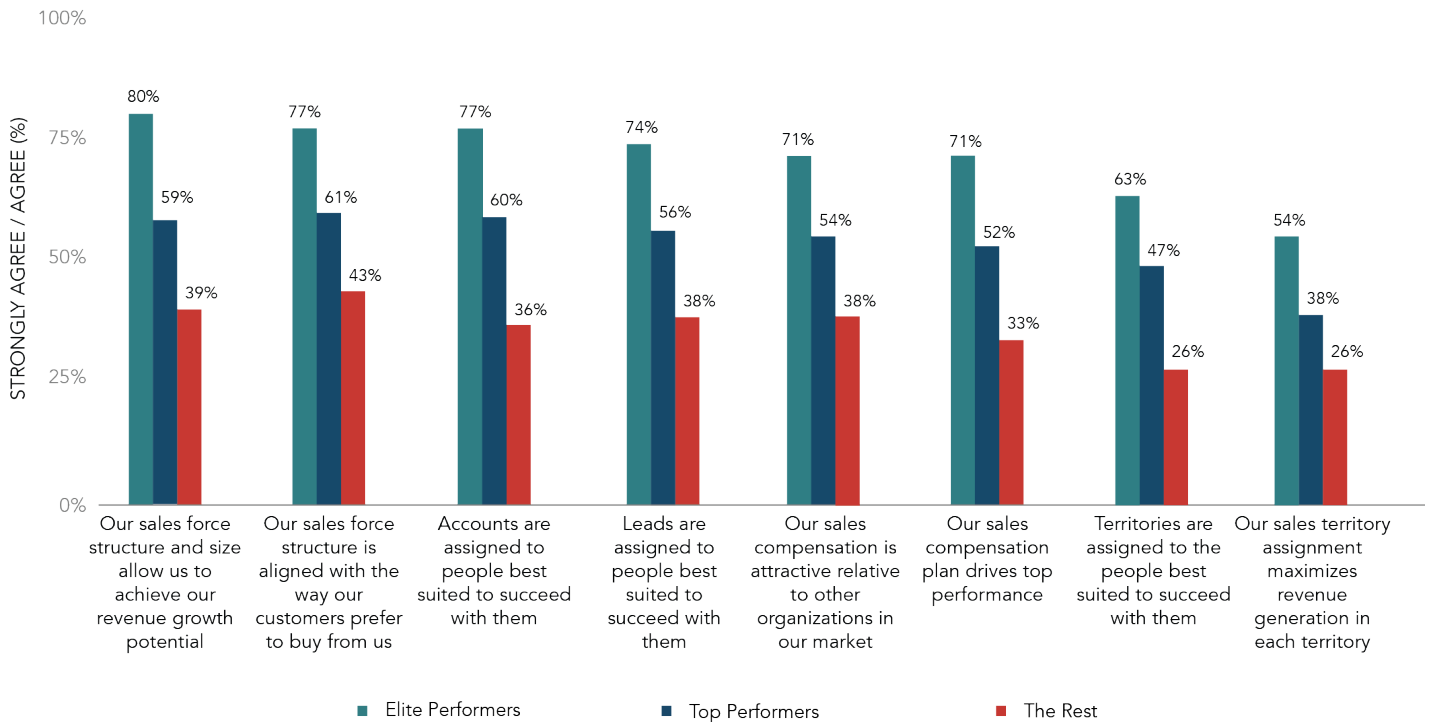


The Structure category of the Sales Performance WheelSM focuses on the structure of the sales force itself, sales compensation, territory design, and territory, account, and lead assignment.

The following shows notable differences between Elite, Top Performers, and The Rest across factors related to structure.

Category	Overall Score	Average Win Rate
Structure	4.0-5.0	58%
	3.0-3.9	45%

Figure 4. Structural Factors by Sales Performance





Takeaways

Structure overall: Structure of the sales force overall, compensation, and lead and account assignments all have significant correlations to Top Performance. Structure makes a difference.

Leader willingness to drive structural change: The gap between the Elite and Top Performer groups and The Rest across much of the category is striking. Consider account and lead assignment: only 38% of The Rest agree leads were assigned to those best suited to succeed with them. Only 36% of The Rest agree that accounts were assigned to the people best suited to succeed with them. In other words, nearly two-thirds of The Rest did not agree accounts were handled by the right people. And remember, The Rest represent 80% of all respondents.

A gut response might be that this is inexcusable. However, it's understandable. Some accounts may have been sourced and built by a particular seller. Let's assume that account represents \$1m in revenue. However, as the years have progressed, it should now be \$10m in revenue, and this account owner is not suited to grow it. Redistributing the account away from the person who sourced and managed it for years is not a decision to be made lightly. While it's understandable why accounts are sometimes led by people not up to the task, it doesn't make it a good business practice. Leaders must have the courage to make the change if it's best for the business.

In sales forces of any size, changing structure is one of the most difficult undertakings. Leaders willing to do it for the right reasons, and get it done the right way, give their teams better odds at achieving Elite and Top Performance.

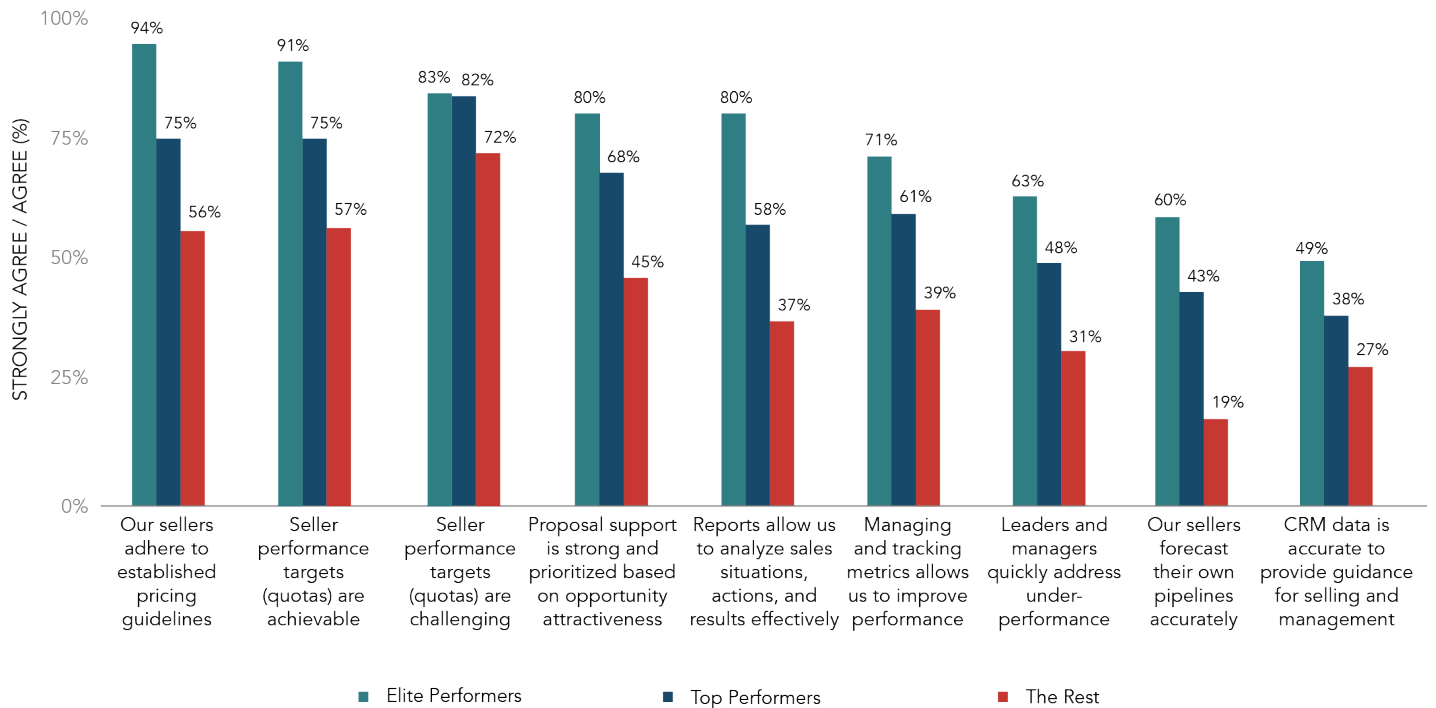


The Operations category of the Sales Performance WheelSM focuses on data management, analytics and reporting, forecasting, pricing operations, quota setting, and accountability.

The following shows notable differences between Elite, Top Performers, and The Rest across the factors related to operations.

Category	Overall Score	Average Win Rate
Operations	4.0-5.0	60%
	3.0-3.9	46%

Figure 5. Operations Factors by Sales Performance



Takeaways

Visibility: From lack of clean data in databases and lack of accuracy in pipelines, to weak dashboards and management analysis tools, Elite and Top Performers fare significantly better than The Rest. When leaders desire to improve results, one of the first questions they should ask is, “How is everything going now?” Without good data, good pipeline management, and good reporting mechanisms, it’s difficult to know where to focus to drive better results.

Pricing: It’s interesting that only about half (56%) of The Rest adhere to the pricing guidelines set by their organizations, while three-quarters (75%) of Top Performers, and almost all (94%) of Elite do. This speaks to an organization’s maturity: if the company sets a guideline like pricing—an area which is critical for company success—and sellers don’t bother following it, it can have a deleterious effect on both revenue and margin. Certainly this is an operational issue, but leadership and management are also responsible for tackling this and getting it right.

Target (quota) setting: A good amount of sales research focuses on whether sellers and organizations achieve their sales targets. Organizations that achieve their targets must be doing the right things, so let’s emulate them, right?



We find it's not necessarily a linear relationship. What if targets are set too low? Does achieving them make the sales organization strong? If a company in the same industry set targets twice as high, but falls short, does that make them under-achievers? In fact, the latter organization may outperform the former, yet if we follow the "achieved target" metric, we'd emulate the lower performer. Consider that Elite and Top Performers believe their performance targets are challenging at 83% and 82% respectively. The Rest come in at 72%. By definition, 100% of Elite and Top Performers meet their sales goals.

The Top Performers are shooting higher and still achieving.

Accountability: It's not surprising that management at Elite and Top-Performing Sales Organizations is significantly more likely to address under-performance issues (63% and 48% respectively), while The Rest is much less likely (31%). Letting under-performers linger too long reduces revenue, increases costs and drags down margin, and has a negative impact on culture. This is certainly an area where gains in effectiveness should improve results and culture, and with only 31% of The Rest and 48% of Top Performers succeeding in this area, the potential for improvement is quite evident.

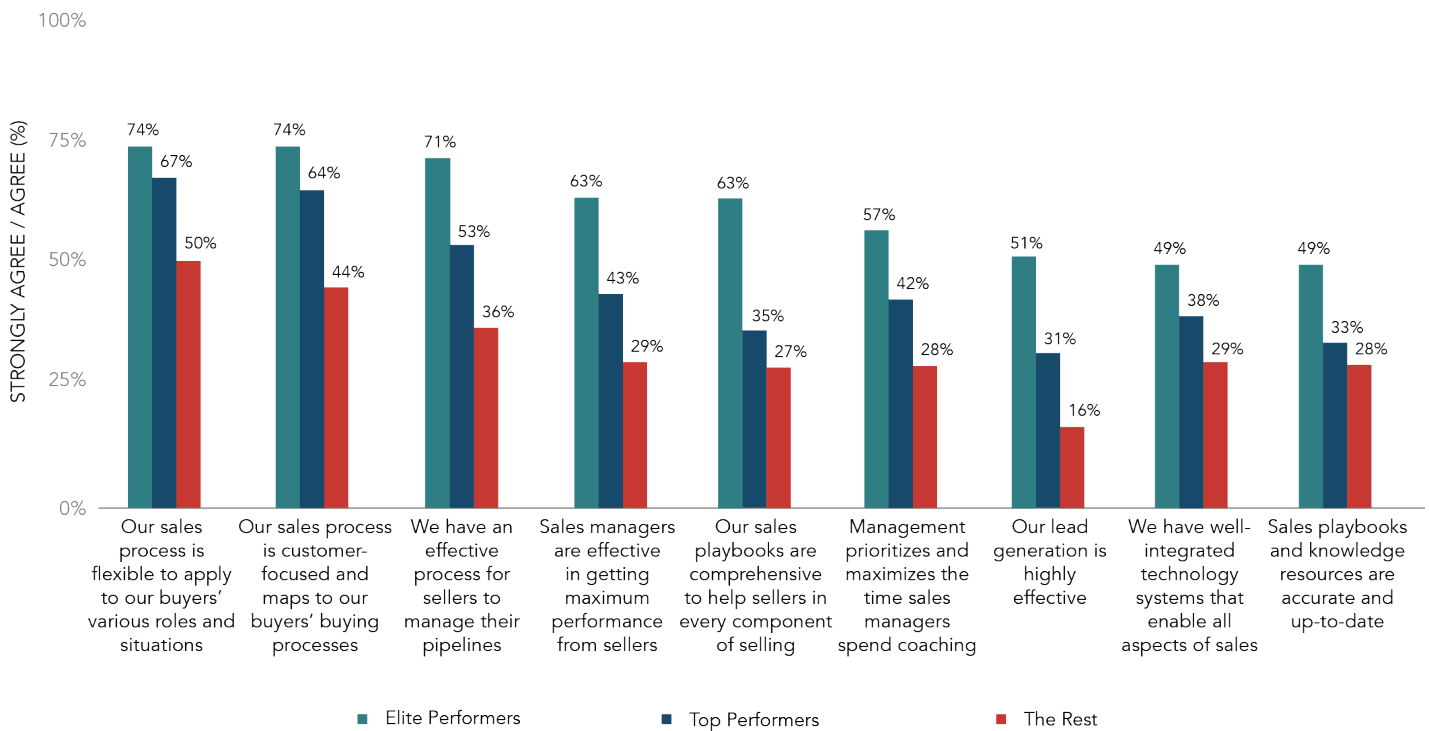


The Enablement category of the Sales Performance WheelSM focuses on sales management and coaching, sales process, sales method, and technologies, tools and resources designed to enable sellers to sell at their potential.

The following shows notable differences between Elite, Top Performers, and The Rest across the factors related to enablement.

Category	Overall Score	Average Win Rate
Enablement	4.0-5.0	58%
	3.0-3.9	45%

Figure 6. Enablement Factors by Sales Performance





Top Performance and Sales Process

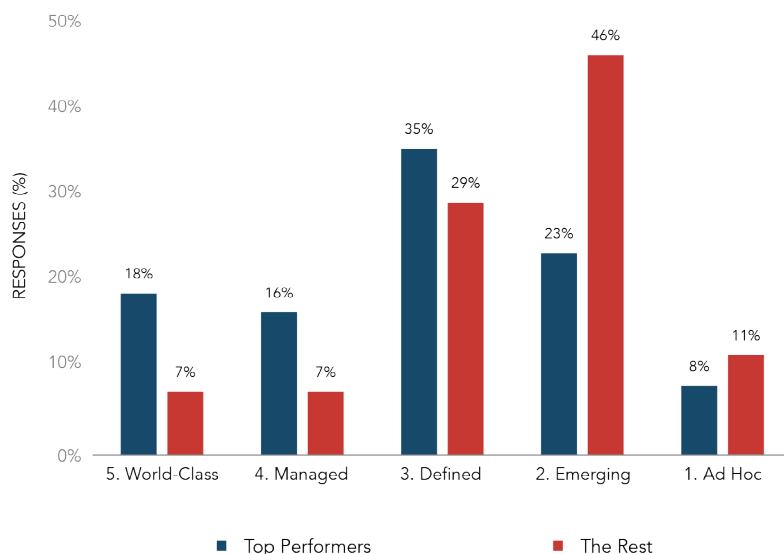
Not only do Top Performers score significantly higher across the enablement factors, they're also more likely to have more mature sales processes.

We asked: Which of the statements below best describes the organization's overall process for winning sales opportunities?

- 1. Ad Hoc (Chaos):** No consistent process or framework for planning to win opportunities.
- 2. Emerging:** Some consistency and planning framework, but still work to do to standardize and make it complete.
- 3. Defined:** Our opportunity management process is defined and we have a tool to guide us to win opportunities.
- 4. Managed (Adoptive):** Number 3, plus it's easy to use, includes specific details and guidance for selling, the process is managed well and helpful to sellers.
- 5. World-Class (Adaptive):** Number 4, plus it's always being measured and improved, it includes best practices for strategies and tactics across the sales cycle, and the process and planning tools are embedded in sellers' workflow and technology.

Top Performers are much more likely to have World-Class and Managed processes, while The Rest are much more likely to have Emerging or Ad Hoc.

Figure 7. Sales Process Maturity by Sales Performance





Top Performance and Sales Methodology

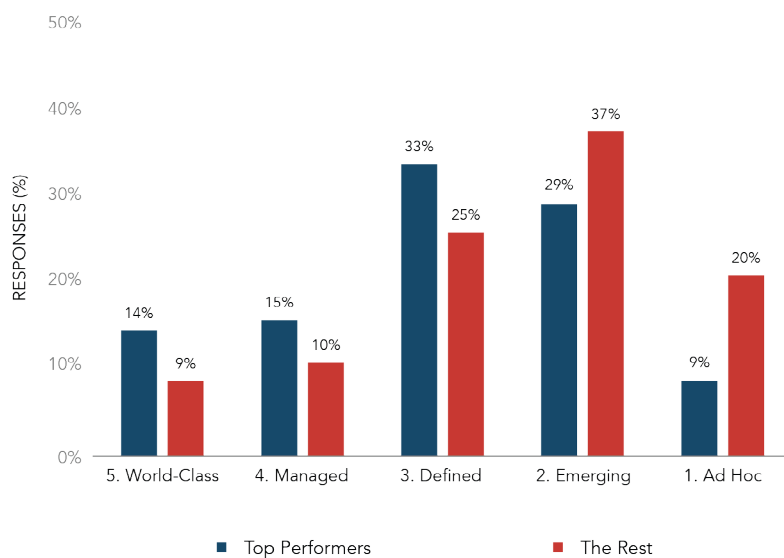
Top Performers are also more likely to have mature sales methodologies.

We asked: Which of the statements below best describes the organization's methodology for selling?

1. **Ad Hoc (Chaos):** Everyone sells their own way.
2. **Emerging:** Some norms, some consistency.
3. **Defined:** We have a defined approach, or method, for selling.
4. **Managed (Adoptive):** Number 3, plus it's easy to use and customized for our organization.
5. **World-Class (Adaptive):** Number 4, plus it's continuously improved.

Top Performers are much more likely to have World-Class and Managed methodologies, while those at The Rest are more likely to be Emerging or Ad Hoc.

Figure 8. Sales Methodology Maturity by Sales Performance





Top Performance and Account Management

When it comes to account management, Top Performers also have more mature processes for maximizing success with existing accounts.

We asked: How would you describe the organization's process for sellers to maximize sales, profit, and retention at existing accounts?

- 1. Ad Hoc (Chaos):** No consistent process.
- 2. Emerging:** Some norms, some consistency, but still work to do to standardize and make it complete.
- 3. Defined:** We have a defined approach for strategic account management. Major actions and outcomes are defined.
- 4. Managed (Adoptive):** Number 3, plus it's easy to use.
- 5. World-Class (Adaptive):** Number 4, plus it's always being measured and improved.

Top Performers are more likely to have World-Class and Defined account management processes.

Figure 9. Account Management Maturity by Sales Performance

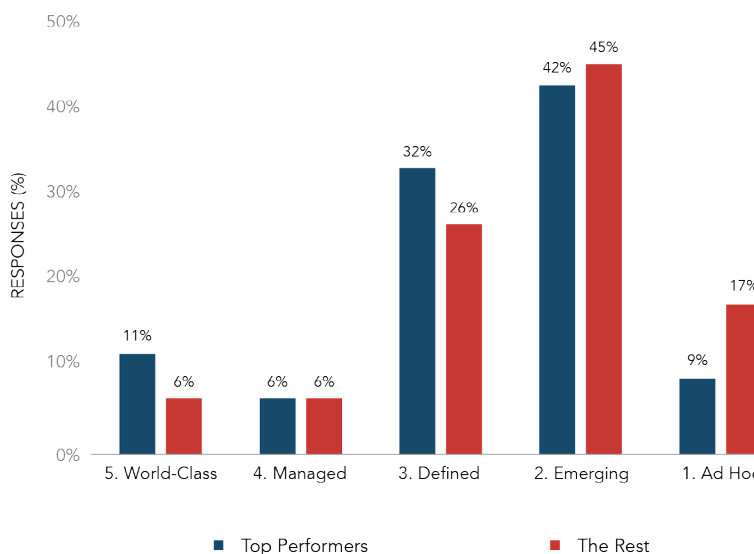
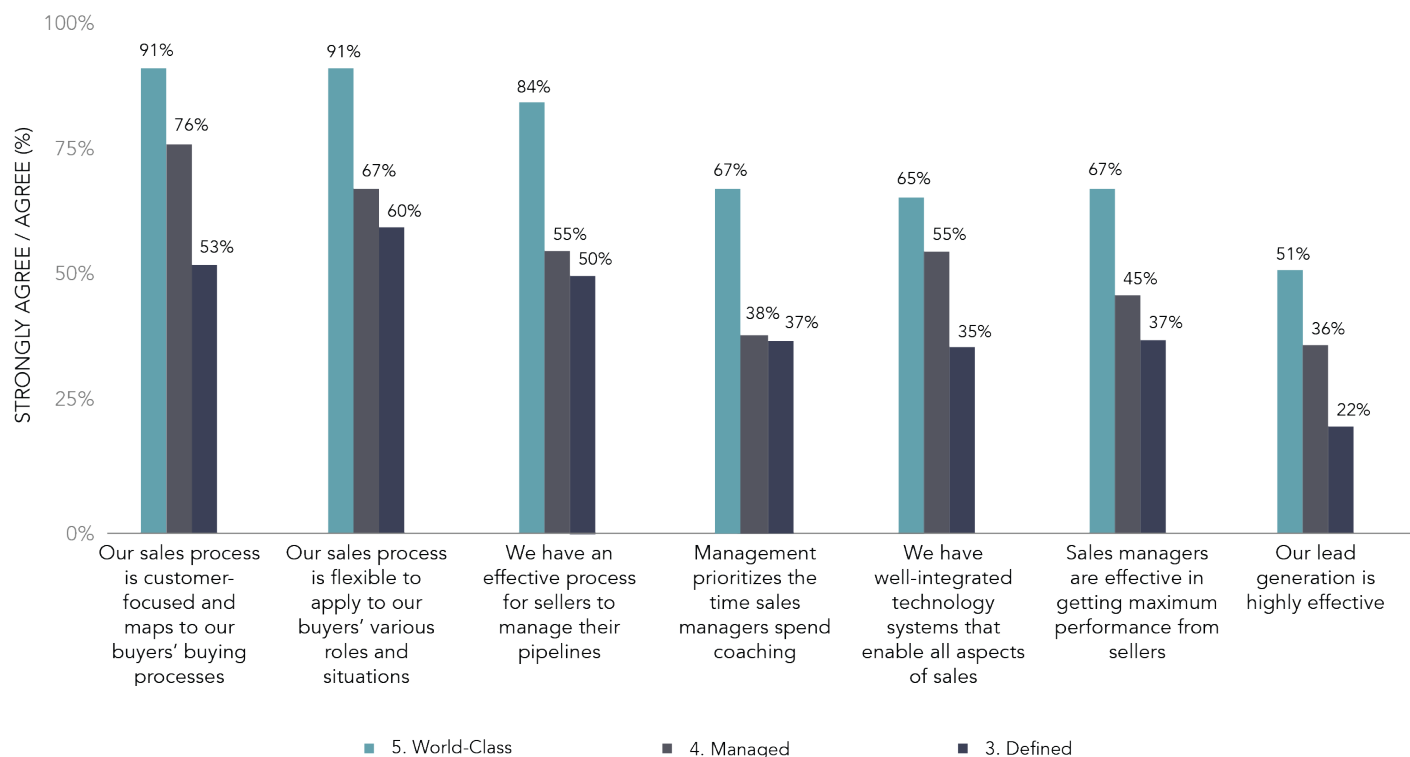




Figure 10. Enablement Factors by Sales Process Maturity



Takeaways

There's a lot to say about sales enablement because there are so many differences between Top Performers and The Rest, and between sales organizations at different levels of Sales Enablement maturity.

Sales process: Recently, there's been backlash against sales leaders focusing on improving their sales processes. For example, the following was published in the *Harvard Business Review*:

Sales leaders have long fixated on process discipline...But recently sales has been caught off guard by a dramatic shift in customers' buying behavior. Even as leadership has tightened compliance with the processes that have served so well, sales performance has grown increasingly erratic...The sales machine is stalling.... Leaders must abandon their fixation on process compliance and embrace a flexible approach to selling driven by sales reps' reliance on insight and judgment.⁴

Based on our research and experience, advice to abandon the sales and opportunity management processes is misguided. We have found the opposite to be true: a focus on sales process, strong process management techniques, and discipline to follow the process doesn't hamper insight and judgment, it unleashes them. The correlation of sales process design- and maturity-related questions to Elite and Top Performers speaks to the critical importance of sales process.

⁴ Brent Adamson, Matthew Dixon, and Nicholas Toman, "Dismantling the Sales Machine," *Harvard Business Review*, November 2013.



Sales method: The companies with a unified approach to selling are significantly more likely to be Top Performers. People often ask about the difference between sales process and sales method. Think about sales process as a series of stages and actions to move from first conversation to winning the sale, and sales method as a philosophy and skill set for how to sell.

In our experience, even if sales process, sales management, strategic account management, technology, and the other elements of the Sales Performance WheelSM are in place, when the people in the organization approach selling in their own individual ways (i.e., no uniform method), you get average performance.

Sales playbooks: Sales playbooks provide specific guidance for sellers to succeed in a variety of sales situations, such as how to inspire buyers with a new idea, perform a needs discovery, position an offering, negotiate, win against difficult competition, and more. It's not surprising that Elite and Top Performers have sales playbooks in place more often than The Rest.

What's interesting is that even the Elite and Top Performers seem to have a lot of room for improvement, with only 35% of Top Performers having comprehensive sales playbooks, and 33% of Top Performers trusting their playbooks and knowledge resources as up-to-date and accurate. For companies who have at least defined their sales process (maturity level 3), adding sales playbooks represents an opportunity to drive higher performance.

Strategic account management: We know from our *Benchmark Report on High Performance in Strategic Account Management* what the best companies do to achieve top performance in this area. Here, and in the Strategy section (page 6), we confirm that a focus on strategic account management as a mature and sophisticated process inside a sales organization correlates significantly to Elite and Top Performance.

Technology: With all the changes in the technology world, it's not surprising that Elite (49%) and Top Performers (38%) have done more to implement well-connected technology to enable the various aspects of selling compared to The Rest (29%). As technology continues to evolve, opportunities to take advantage of it to drive sales performance will arise regularly.

When it comes to technology, proceed with caution. In our experience, it's primarily companies with at least a maturity level of 3 in sales process, method, and strategic account management that have been able to systematically use technology to their advantage. Turning to technology too early in your sales maturation process often turns out to be a waste of time and money at best—or a disaster at worst. Meanwhile, at the right time, technology can provide numerous advantages for sellers.

Sales management: Organizations where sales managers inspire the best performance from sellers are significantly more likely to be found among Elite (63%) and Top Performers (43%) compared to The Rest (29%).

It's more than this, however. For sales enablement to work—process, playbooks, technology, method, and the like—sales management must be in place and effective. Like technology, it's typically a good time to focus on sales management effectiveness when the organization has reached at least a level 3 of maturity in sales process and method. Making sure these tools are adopted, used most effectively, and improved over time is almost always contingent on effective sales management with a strong focus on enabling seller success.



The Talent Management category of the Sales Performance WheelSM focuses on overall strength of talent, the competencies of sellers and sales managers, recruiting, selection and assignment, and onboarding.

The following shows the difference between Elite, Top Performers, and The Rest across the factors related to talent management.

Category	Overall Score	Average Win Rate
Talent Management	4.0-5.0	57%
	3.0-3.9	46%

Figure 11. Talent Management Factors by Sales Performance

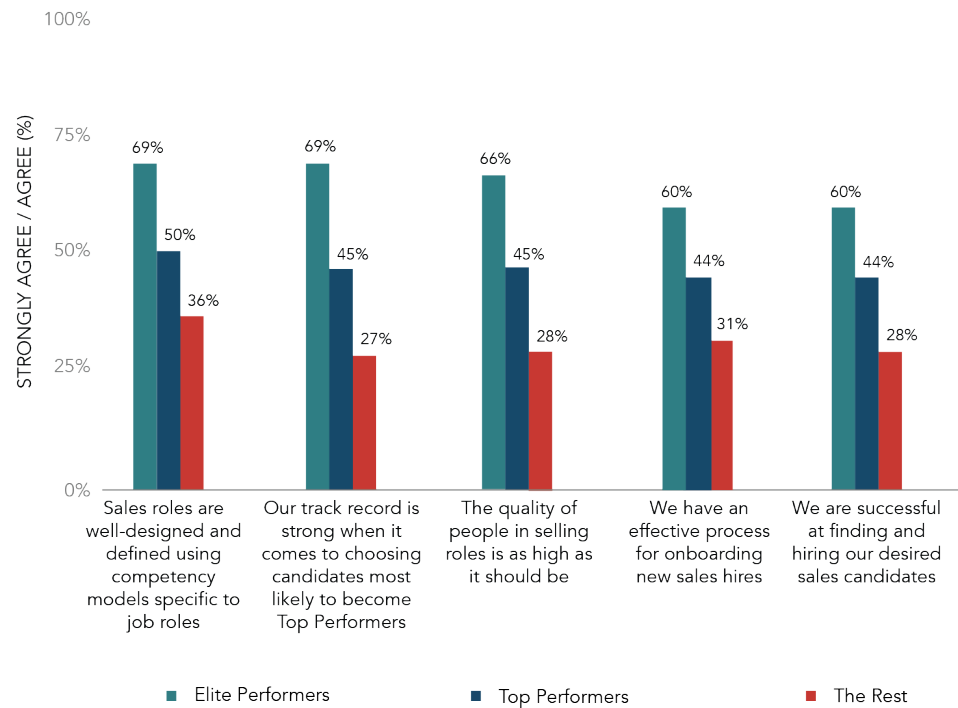
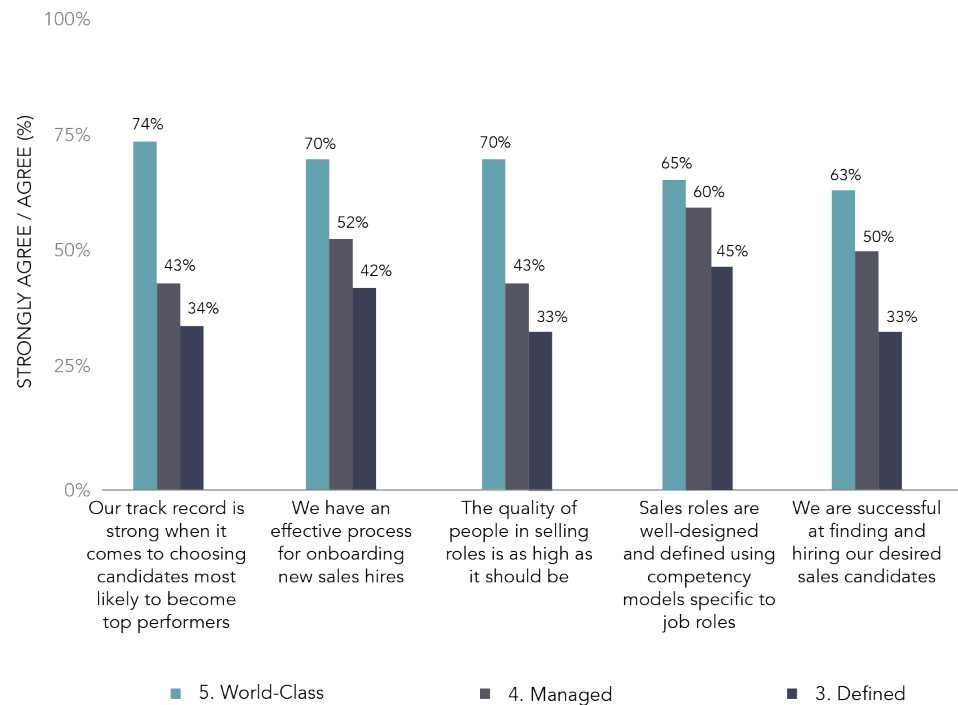




Figure 12. Talent Management Factors by Sales Process Maturity



Takeaways

Get organized: Three areas stand out in terms of how organization and structure correlate with the category of Talent Management.

- Role definition: Sales roles are well-designed and defined for 69% of the Elite and 50% of the Top Performers, but only for 36% of The Rest.
- Onboarding: Onboarding is effective for 60% of Elite and 44% of Top Performers, but only 31% of The Rest.
- Sales process maturity effect: Across each Talent question, the scores are higher for companies that have more mature sales processes.

That the organized companies perform better in the Talent category makes sense. If you know what sellers are supposed to do (sales process), which skills, knowledge, and attributes are needed to do it (competency models), and have an effective process for getting sellers up to speed (onboarding), you'll get the right people in the right roles with the right skills doing the right things. Short of this, sellers may or may not be well suited for the roles, make their own pot-luck choices for how to sell, and then sink or swim on their own.



The Training category of the Sales Performance WheelSM focuses on the development of sellers, and the organization's culture and investment around training and education. In addition to overall effectiveness, it also addresses training effectiveness in specific areas such as driving and winning opportunities and account growth.

Category	Overall Score	Average Win Rate
Training	4.0-5.0	58%
	3.0-3.9	47%

Sales Training Effectiveness, Investment, and Value Focus

Figure 13. Sales Training Effectiveness by Performance

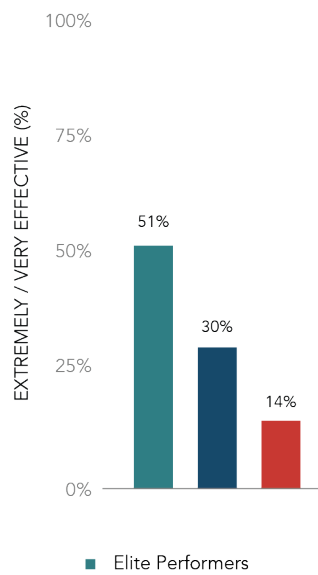
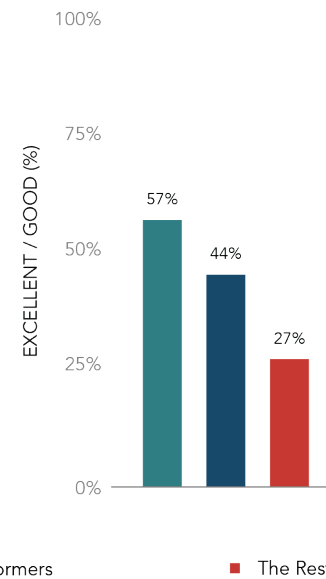


Figure 14. Investment and Focus on Sales Training by Performance

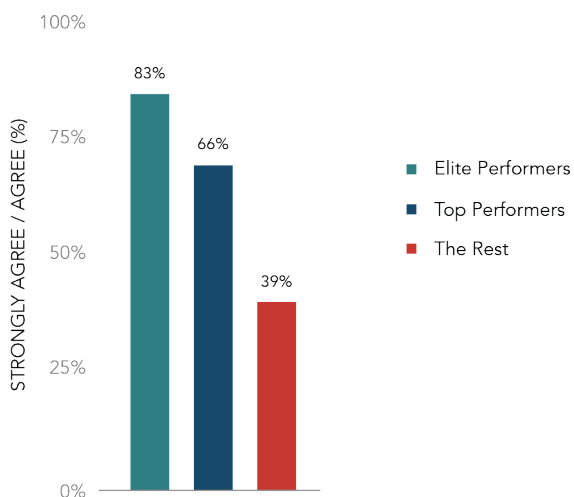


Top Performers are two times more likely to say their training is very or extremely effective. They also invest significantly more in it and are focused on sales training.



The Top Performers are also much more likely to prioritize the development of skills to be as valuable as possible to buyers.

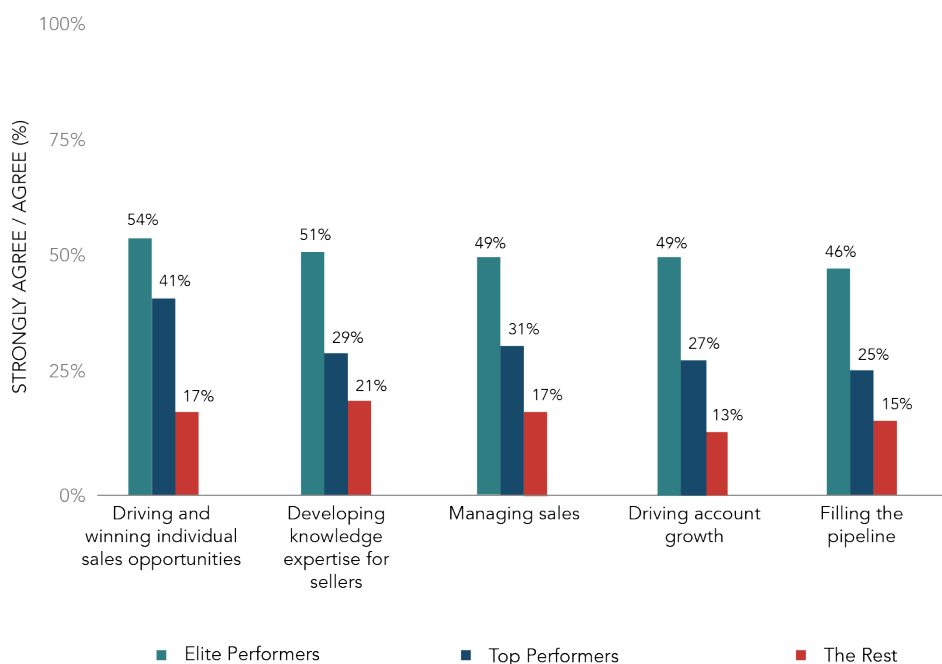
Figure 15. Company Leaders Prioritize Developing Sellers to Be as Valuable to Buyers as Possible



Sales Training Effectiveness and Skill Areas

We also asked respondents if they agree they have effective sales training in specific skill areas.

Figure 16. Sales Training Effectiveness for Skills and Knowledge Areas





Takeaways

Value—stark difference: “Our company leaders prioritize developing sellers to be as valuable as possible to the buyers” scores at 83% for Elite and 66% for Top Performers. Meanwhile, The Rest are at 39%. This is a notable difference, and underscores the importance of driving value through the sales team.

Substantial opportunity for improvement: Only about half (46% to 54%) of the Elite Performer group is willing to agree they have effective training in each of the areas we inquired about. And remember, this is only 7% of our database. The Top Performer group agrees with the various training area questions only between 25% and 41% of the time. This represents a huge opportunity and advantage for those companies willing to strive for ‘agree’ answers in each training area.

Achieve effective training and you increase capability. Combine this increased capability with strong sales management that directs capable people to use their time well and pursue top performance, assisted by the right performance enablement tools, and both new opportunities and win rates will go up substantially.

Invest in effective sales training: Elite and Top Performers invest more in sales training and are two times more likely to rate the training as effective. Interestingly, at least some of The Rest are willing to invest in sales training (27%), yet they don’t do what it takes to make the training effective (14%).



The Capabilities category of the Sales Performance WheelSM focuses on the skills of filling the pipeline, driving sales opportunity wins, driving account growth, and managing sales teams, as well as the strength of expertise levels across the various areas needed to sell effectively.

Category	Overall Score	Average Win Rate
Capabilities	4.0-5.0	56%
	3.0-3.9	45%

The gap between Elite Performers, Top Performers, and The Rest across skill categories is large.

Figure 17. Sellers Have the Skills They Need to Find and Win Business Consistently and at a High Level

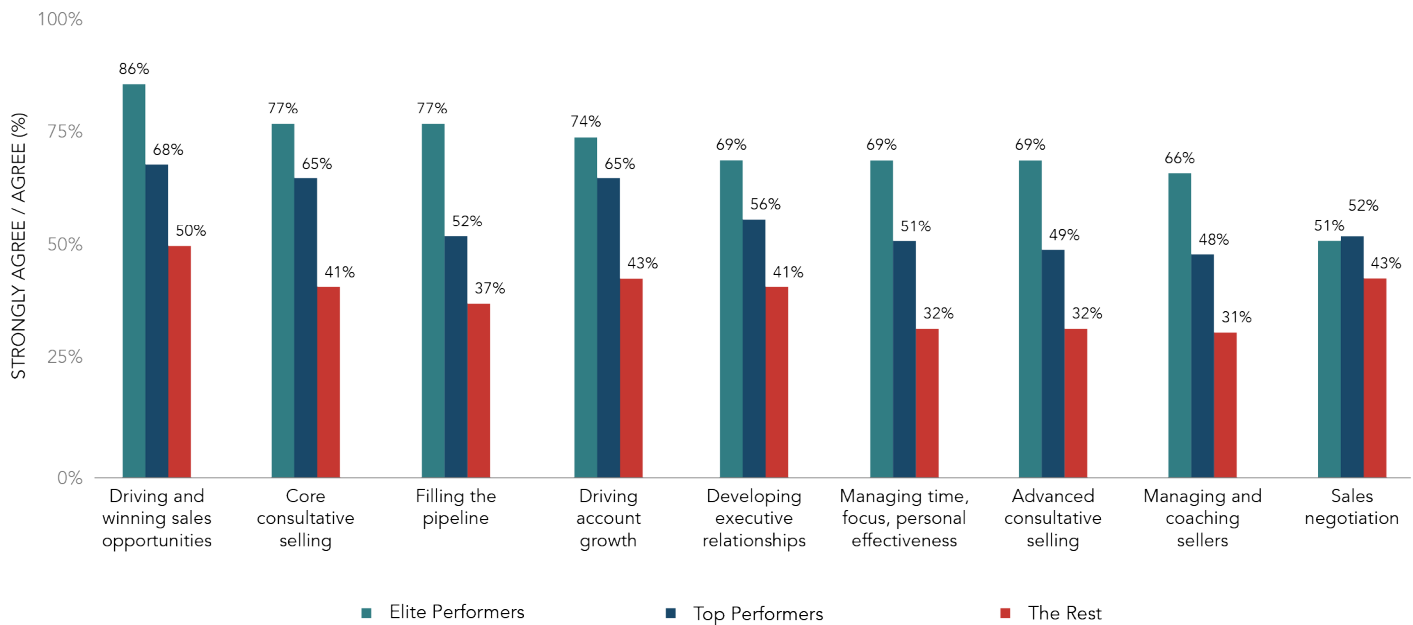


Figure 18. Capability Factors by Sales Performance

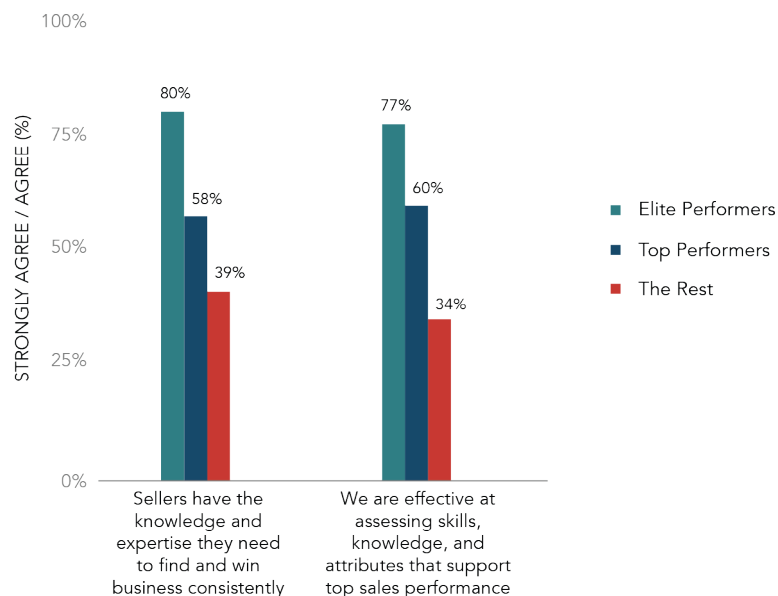




Figure 19. Sales Skills by Sales Training Effectiveness

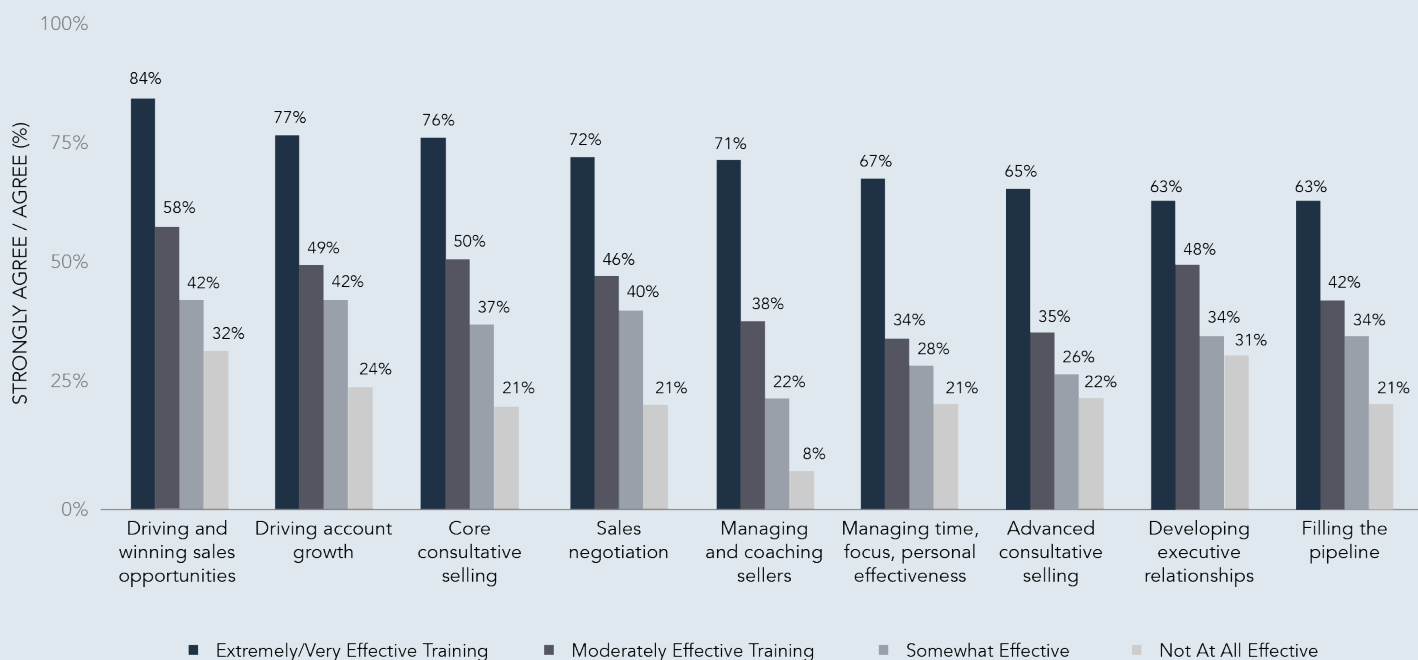
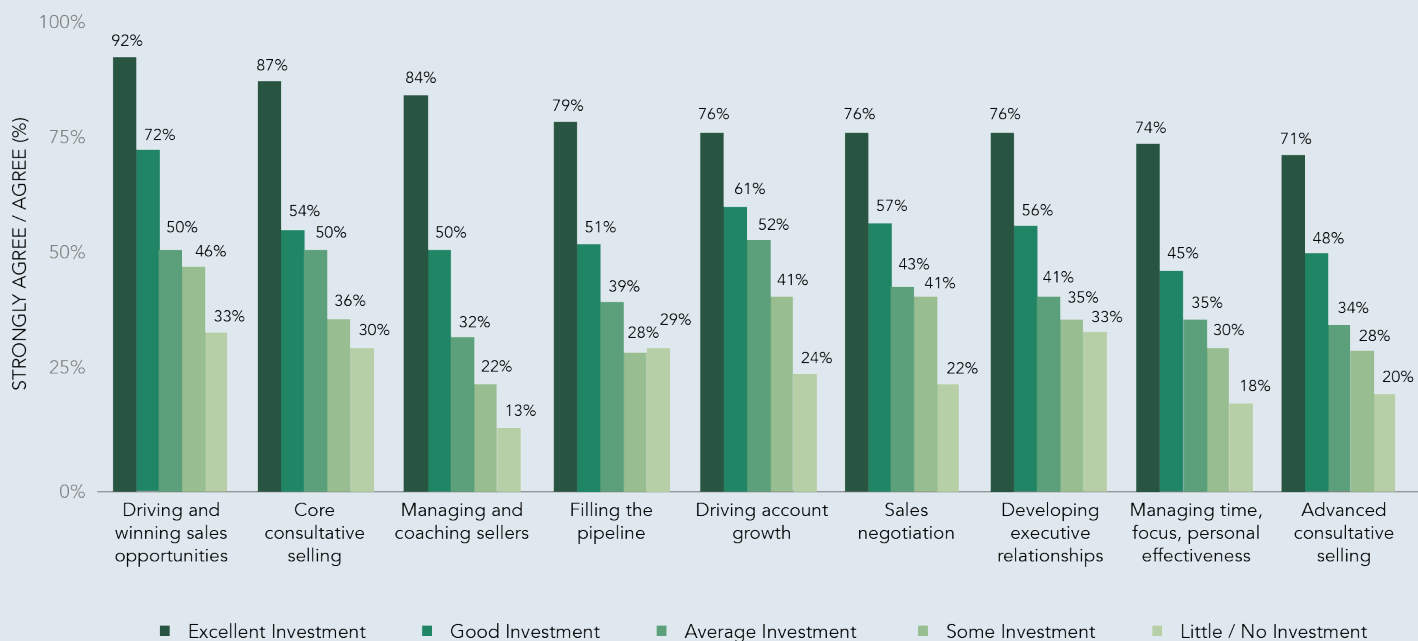


Figure 20. Sales Skills by Sales Training Investment Level





Takeaways

Knowledge: It is striking that 80% of Elite and 58% of Top Performers have sellers with the knowledge needed to sell effectively, compared to only 39% of The Rest. Remember, The Rest represent about 80% of our respondent database. This means that, on average, six in 10 companies have sellers who aren't knowledgeable enough to sell.

Predicting performance: While 77% of Elite and 60% of Top Performers are effective at assessing the competences that support top sales performance, only 34% of The Rest are. With so few organizations having strong competency profiles for sales jobs, and such a wide range in sales process maturity, this isn't surprising.

Driving sales wins—the highest high: The strongest skill area for Top and Elite Performers is driving and winning sales opportunities at 86% and 68% respectively. It's no wonder companies that focus on driving sales wins actually win more sales opportunities.

Core and advanced consultative selling: The second strongest skill area for Elite and Top Performers is core consultative selling skills. Of 72 factors we studied, core consultative selling skills is the fourth greatest gap between Top Performers and The Rest.

69% of Elite Performers agree their teams have strong advanced consultative selling skills, such as inspiring buyers with ideas and helping them see issues in a new light. Just under half (49%) of Top Performers have these skills, as does only 32% of The Rest. There's an opportunity to improve across the board in these areas. Based on our *What Sales Winners Do Differently* research,⁵ advances in these areas will drive both win rate and client loyalty.

Skills as a whole: Elite and Top Performers score higher in every Capability area we studied. However, no single Capability was a key driver of Elite or Top Performance, just as there wasn't any single factor in Strategy, Structure, Operations, Enablement, and the other categories that individually made the difference. This is similar to sports. In basketball, dribbling does not make for team wins. Nor does passing, or shooting, or defense, or good coaching. But together in the right mixes, the right skills add up to wins.

Sales management: Only 31% of The Rest agree or strongly agree they have the skills to manage and coach sellers. It's surprising that this skill is even lower than prospecting, which is a notorious complaint area in all but the best sales organizations. Sales management also scores the lowest and second to lowest for the Top Performers and Elite groups, respectively, representing an area where most organizations can improve.

Training effect on capabilities: A common strategy question for leadership teams goes as follows: "Should we hire people with strong capabilities already and not bother with training, or should we hire people with strong potential, and train them?" Those who choose the latter tend to worry about whether a focus on training will even make a difference.

Statistically, the correlations couldn't be more evident. Companies that have strong sales training effectiveness, and investment also have much higher skill ratings than those that don't.

⁵ Mike Schultz and John Doerr, *What Sales Winners Do Differently*, (RAIN Group, 2014).

Motivation



The Motivation category of the Sales Performance WheelSM focuses on seller attitudes, leadership's ability to create and sustain selling energy, and the organization's culture with respect to selling.

The following shows the difference between Elite, Top Performers, and The Rest across factors related to motivation.

Category	Overall Score	Average Win Rate
Motivation	4.0-5.0	54%
	3.0-3.9	46%

Figure 21. Motivation Factors by Sales Performance

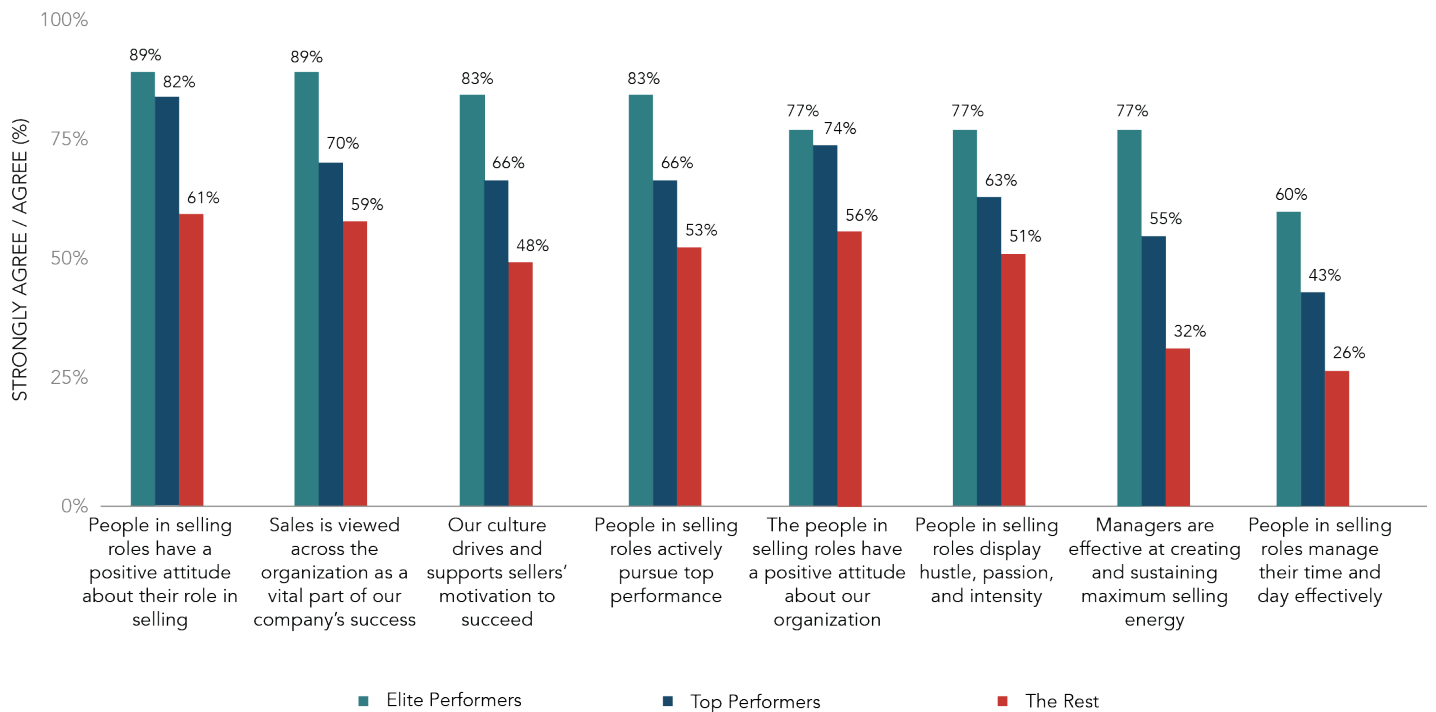
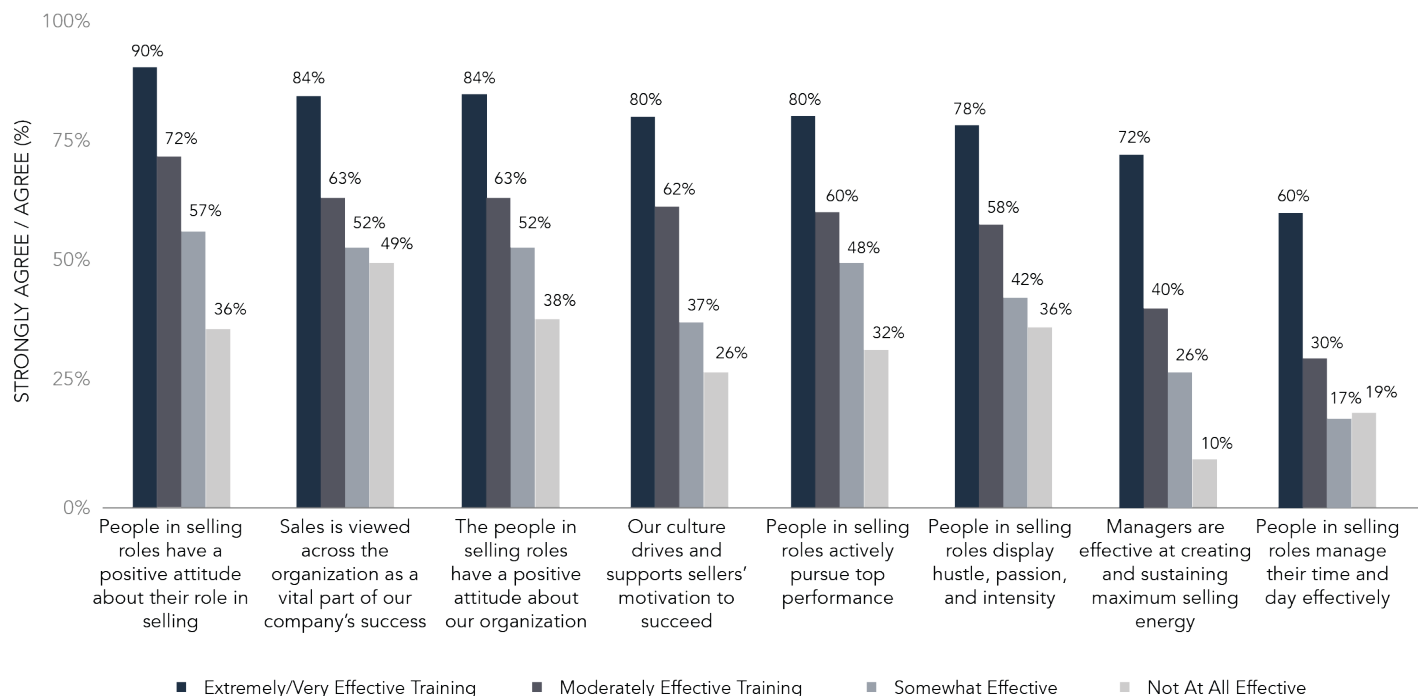




Figure 22. Motivation by Sales Training Effectiveness



Takeaways

Sales training effectiveness and motivation: As we studied each category, we looked for correlations among dozens of different factors across our research. Sometimes we found the same thing in each category, but sometimes one area stood out as surprising. For Motivation factors, the surprising correlation is sales training effectiveness.

Managing time and day: It's unexpected just how low (26%) The Rest score in managing their time and day for execution. Elite and Top Performers are significantly better, but still leave a lot of room for improvement at 60% and 43% respectively.

Sales manager effect: The difference between performer groups is also significant regarding the effectiveness of managers and leaders in creating maximum energy from their sellers. More than three-quarters (77%) of Elite agree or strongly agree, with just over half of Top Performers (55%), and just under one-third (32%) of The Rest agreeing.

Sales training effectiveness and investment combined:

- On capabilities: The previous section on Capabilities notes that sales training effectiveness and respondents' perception of how much the organization invests in seller development have a significant and material effect on capabilities and results. Capabilities across the board correlate with Elite and Top Performance, and depth and rigor of training correlate with capabilities themselves.
- On motivation: There are significant correlations with sales training effectiveness and investment on motivation. When sellers are confident in their skills, and feel like the organization is investing in them, attitude and energy are maximized.

Think about it in the opposite: when sellers are unsure of themselves when selling, and don't believe the organization is interested in helping them to improve their performance, it doesn't follow that you'll get a team selling with hustle, passion, and intensity consistently over the long-term.

Research Background, Method, and Demographics

The objective of the research was to answer the question: What do the Top-Performing Sales Organizations do differently than The Rest? The survey examined performance results and various elements of sales organization performance, including: strategy, structure, operations, enablement, talent management, training, capabilities, and motivation.

The data was analyzed in multiple slices, including: annual sales revenue, number of sellers, industry, geography, revenue per account, revenue and profitability growth, competitive position, sales process (maturity and adoption), sales methodology (maturity and adoption), sales training (maturity, effectiveness, and investment), value focus, and sales performance.

Data for this report was collected from 472 sellers and executives via online survey administered between June and August 2015 to The RAIN Group Center for Sales Research (CSR) Panel, and RAIN Group and partner audiences.

Annual Revenue	% of Total
Less than \$50 million	36%
\$50 million to less than \$1 billion	37%
\$1 billion or greater	27%

Number of Sellers	% of Total
10 to 99	54%
100+	46%

Role in Organization	% of Total
Individual Contributor	20%
Manager	26%
Director	24%
Vice President	16%
C-Level	12%
Other	2%

Geography	% of Total
Americas	57%
Europe, Middle East, Africa	28%
Asia-Pacific	15%

Industry	% of Total
Professional Services	24%
Technology	21%
Banking, Insurance & Financial Services	13%
Business Services	11%
Other	31%

Sales Benchmark Analysis and Plan

Benchmark Your Organization Against Top Performers

Most leaders know there is huge untapped revenue growth potential in their sales organization. However, structuring and organizing for growth, finding and developing the right people, and enabling them to achieve their sales potential is frustratingly elusive. In the name of sales performance improvement, companies try many different tactics that often fall short of their goal.

In *The Top-Performing Sales Organization Benchmark Report*, we studied 472 sellers and executives, representing companies with sales forces ranging from 10 sellers to 5,000+. Our goal was to learn what the Top-Performing Sales Organizations—those with higher win rates, that meet their sales goals, and achieve maximum pricing in line with the value they provide—do to reach Top Performer status.

We've identified 75 specific factors, organized around the eight drivers in the Sales Performance WheelSM, that impact a sales team's ultimate performance and growth. In our Sales Benchmark Analysis and Plan, we will benchmark your organization against these Top Performers, and our consultants will perform an analysis of the greatest areas of improvement opportunity in your sales organization. You will:

- Find out how you stack up against our database of Top-Performing Sales Organizations in each category
- Learn the best avenues for sales performance improvement for your company
- Identify current strengths and areas of improvement across sellers
- Put a Sales Growth Plan of Action in place to implement improvements as quickly and effectively as possible



The Sales Benchmark Analysis and Plan will uncover your greatest, and often hidden, opportunities for growth. You'll be equipped with a Sales Growth Plan of Action allowing you to implement with confidence.

Contact Us to Discover How You Stack Up Against Top Performers

Top Performers:

- Achieve higher opportunity win rates
- Meet their sales goals more often
- Capture value-based pricing
- Grow revenue more often and more dramatically than The Rest

To benchmark your organization and learn what you need to do join their ranks, contact RAIN Group today at 508-405-0438 or info@raingroup.com.

About RAIN Group

Unleash the Sales Potential of Your Team with RAIN Group

RAIN Group is a sales training, assessment, and performance improvement company that helps leading organizations improve sales results. We've helped hundreds of thousands of salespeople, managers, and professionals in more than 62 countries increase their sales significantly with RAIN Group's consulting and sales methodology.

We can help you:

Implement Sales Training that Delivers Real Results

RAIN Group's sales training system inspires real change and delivers real results that last. Our rigorous approach includes sales team evaluation, customized training programs, robust reinforcement, and coaching to help you and your team develop sales and negotiation skills, and maximize your results.

Grow Your Key Accounts

At most companies, there's a huge, untapped opportunity to add more value—and thus sell more—to existing accounts. We help our clients capitalize on these revenue growth opportunities. Whether it's simply increasing cross-selling and up-selling or implementing a major strategic account management program, we can help.

Identify Who Can and Will Sell with Great Success

Our assessments measure sales attributes and skills, identifying the factors that really make a difference in sales performance. Whether you're looking to hire someone who can and will sell, or looking to improve sales performance, we'll help you build the most successful sales team.

Implement Would-Class Sales Coaching

We coach sellers, professionals, and leaders individually and in groups to achieve the greatest and fastest increase in sales results. And we train and certify leaders and managers in our RAIN Sales Coaching system. Often, it's RAIN Sales Coaching that truly unlocks the team's potential, and keeps them motivated to produce the best results consistently.

Find out more about how RAIN Group can help you
unleash the sales potential of your team by visiting
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