

BENCHMARK REPORT

THE TOP-PERFORMING *SALES MANAGER*

Insightful data from sellers and sales managers reveals what managers of top-performing teams do differently

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Introduction

A major finding from a previous study of ours, The Top-Performing Sales Organization, is that sales management and coaching is a key area where Top-Performing Sales Organizations are drastically different from The Rest.¹

The organizations with the best sales results prioritize sales coaching significantly more than the rest, and they have more skilled and motivating sales managers.

This finding inspired additional questions: what do Top-Performing Sales Managers and coaches do? How do they work with sellers? What skills do they have? Are some skills more important than others? In what mixes?

In addition, is there anything that business leaders *don't talk about* and *don't focus sales manager attention on* that they should if they want to drive better business results?

This global, year-long RAIN Group Center for Sales Research study of 1,004 sales managers and sellers focused on the role of the sales manager. We learned what the best sales managers do to achieve top performance and drive exceptionally stronger sales results.

And was there anything surprising? Resoundingly, yes.

Read on to learn what we found about what defines Top-Performing Sales Managers, and the difference they can have on sales performance and results.

¹ The Top-Performing Sales Organization Benchmark Report, RAIN Group Center for Sales Research.

This Research Analyzed 100 Skills and Behaviors Across 12 Categories

Other Selling Skills Core Consultative Selling

1. Sales Management and Coaching
2. Relationships
3. Needs Discovery
4. Conversations and Communication
5. Solution Crafting
6. Value Case Making
7. Advancing the Sale
8. Negotiating
9. Prospecting
10. Account Management
11. Virtual Selling
12. Productivity

Questions Answered in This Report

Top Performance in Sales Management

- How do we define top performance in sales management? (See page 12)
- What do the managers of top-performing sales teams do differently than other sales managers? (See page 22)
- Where do managers and sellers see eye to eye regarding what the best sales managers do? Where do they differ? (See page 23)
- Can the skills and behaviors of Top-Performing Sales Managers be *learned*? (See page 23)
- What's the business impact for sales teams with Top-Performing Sales Managers? (See page 28)
- What makes for the most productive sales teams? (See page 17)

Top-Performing Sales Manager Model

- What are the roles Top-Performing Sales Managers fulfill better than other managers? (See page 14)
- Which roles are critically important to sales management success that are *rarely discussed and focused on* with sales managers? (See page 27)
- What drives manager confidence and why is it so important? (See page 24)
- What drives manager effectiveness in the eyes of sellers and why does it matter? (See page 23)

Impact of Coaching

- Does coaching rhythm and frequency make a difference in sales performance? (See page 18)
- How should coaching be combined with other approaches for the greatest impact on sales success? (See page 19)
- What's more important for most companies to change: frequency of coaching or specific coaching skills? (See page 21)

To find the answers, we studied 1,004 sales managers and sellers worldwide: 624 sales managers—333 who both manage and sell, and 291 who manage exclusively—and 380 sellers across industries, geographies, and company sizes. See research methodology and demographics on page 35.

We highlight our key findings in this report.

Executive Summary of Key Findings

1. Rhythm, Roles, and Conversations Separate Top-Performing Sales Managers from Other Managers

We studied 100 skills and behaviors across 12 categories in three areas: selling, productivity, and sales management and coaching.

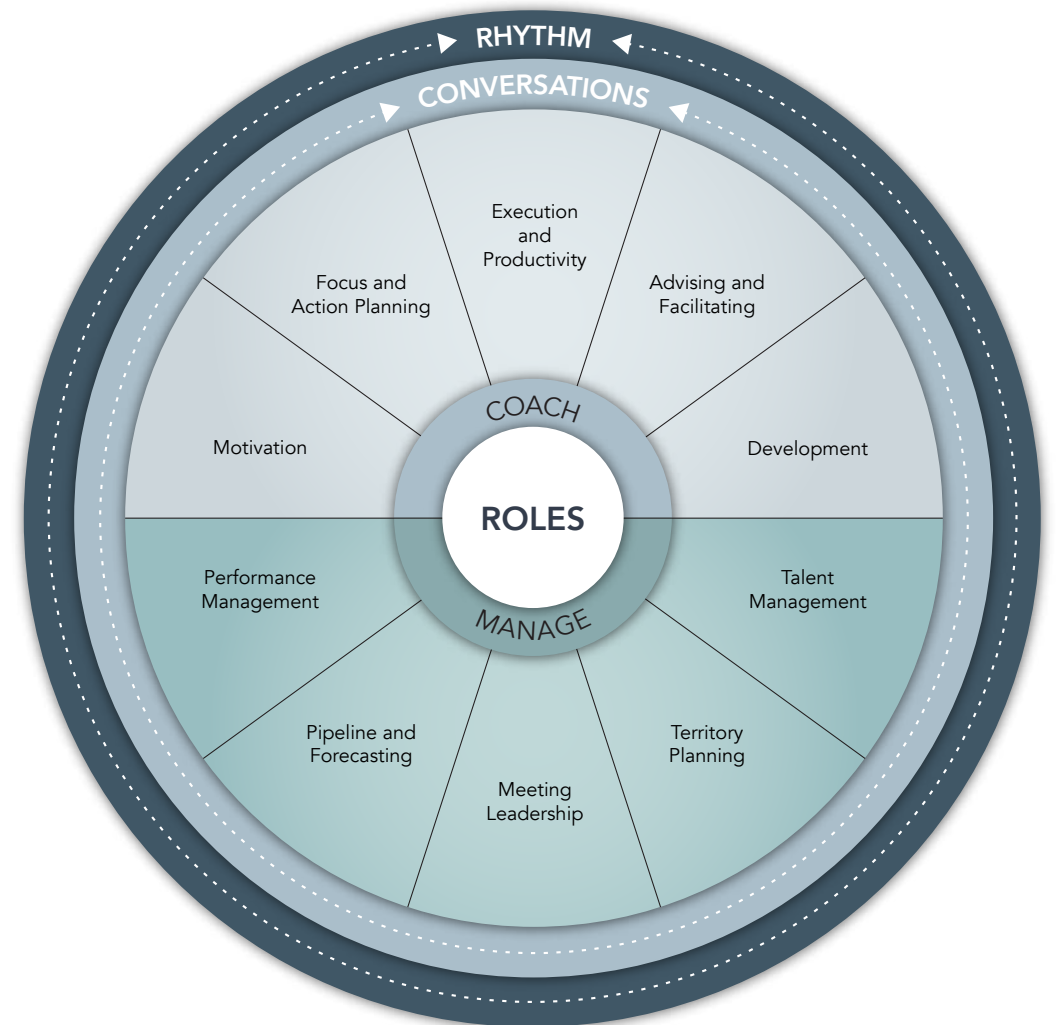
We found that sales manager success can be summed up in 3 words: **rhythm, roles, and conversations**.

Top Performers have a more consistent and effective cadence (or rhythm) of interactions with their teams. They excel in 10 specific roles:

- 5 focused on sales coaching (top half of the model)
- 5 focused on sales management (bottom half of the model)

Top-Performing Sales Managers play all 10 roles better than other managers (see page 14).

They're also more skilled at leading conversations to drive top sales performance related to each role.



Executive Summary of Key Findings

2. Effective Management + Regular Coaching Rhythm + Effective Training Correlates Significantly to Outsized Sales Performance

We analyzed several combinations of factors to see which had the greatest correlation with performance. We often don't find anything that stands out when we do this. This time we did.

First, Top-Performing Sales Managers are much more likely to provide coaching with a set rhythm and regular frequency compared to other managers.

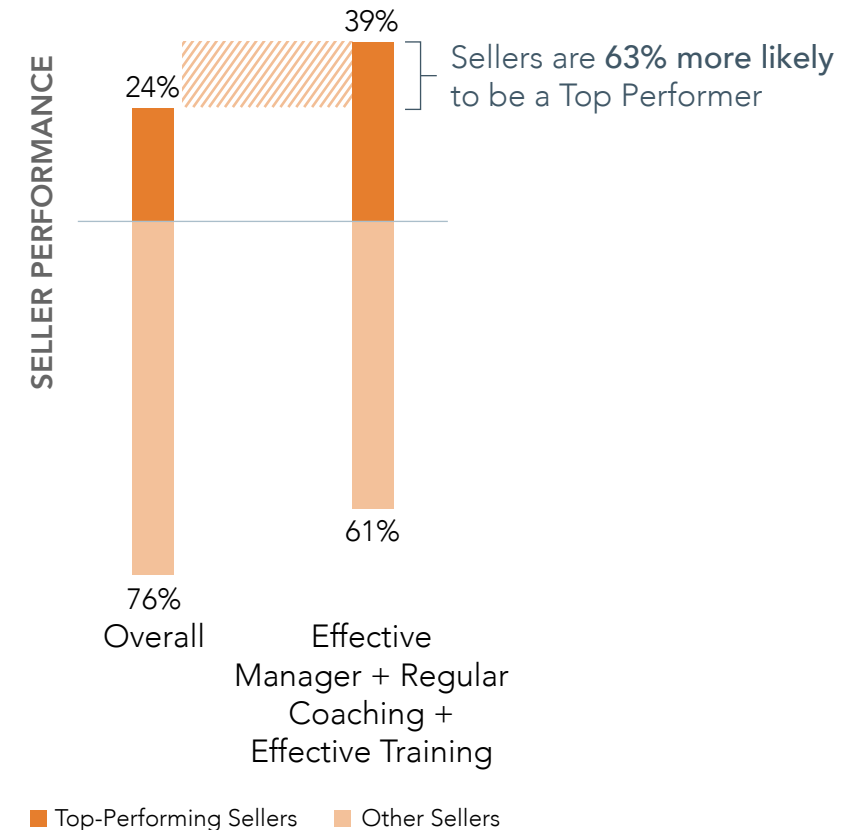
Next, managers must be effective *in the eyes of the seller*, meaning they value the manager's coaching, advice, and guidance.

Third, combine these with effective sales training.

Together, these factors make a 63% increased likelihood that a seller is a Top Performer.

Take any of these away—manager effectiveness, coaching frequency, and training effectiveness—and the likelihood of top performance drops dramatically.

IMPACT OF MANAGER + COACHING + SALES TRAINING ON SELLER PERFORMANCE
% RESPONDENTS



Executive Summary of Key Findings

3. Motivating Sellers for High Productivity and Performance Is Critically Important

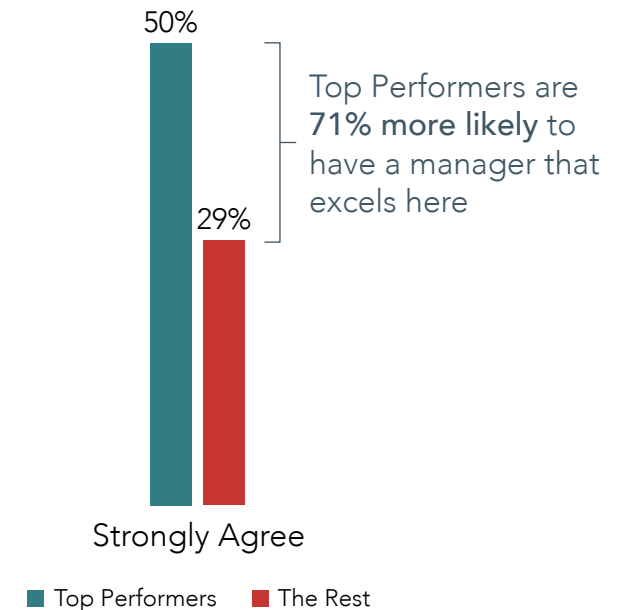
The #1 sales management and coaching skills difference between Top Performers and The Rest is motivating sellers for high productivity and performance.

Sellers that work for Top-Performing Sales Managers are significantly more likely to be stronger across all nine productivity factors studied (see page 27).

It's critical for sellers to have a manager who motivates for productivity, but to do so, sales managers *themselves* must be highly productive—both to drive their own success *and* inspire their teams.

Organizations need to increase their attention to helping sellers and sales managers be maximally productive.

I/MY MANAGER EXCEL(S) AT MOTIVATING SELLERS FOR HIGH PRODUCTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE
% RESPONDENTS



Executive Summary of Key Findings

4. Build Sales Manager Confidence—It Matters

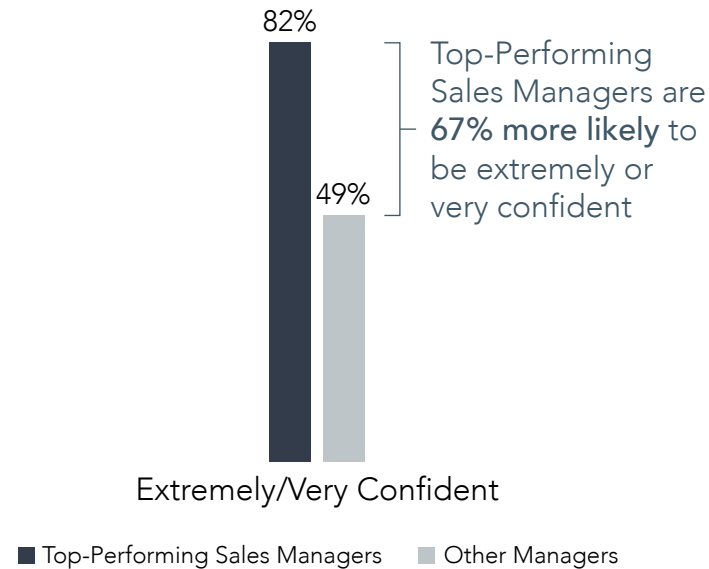
Top-Performing Sales Managers are much more likely to be highly confident in their ability to help their sellers achieve strong sales performance.

Sales managers of top-performing teams are 67% more likely to be extremely or very confident in their ability to help their sellers achieve strong sales performance.

And, based on this study, we now know what the key drivers of sales manager confidence are (see page 25).

Confidence matters from the seller's perspective, too. If sellers don't believe sales managers are effective and can help them achieve strong performance, sellers are less likely to be Top Performers (see page 33).

SALES MANAGER CONFIDENCE IN ABILITY TO HELP SELLERS ACHIEVE STRONG SALES PERFORMANCE
% RESPONDENTS



SALES MANAGER EFFECTIVENESS ACCORDING TO SELLERS
% RESPONDENTS



Executive Summary of Key Findings

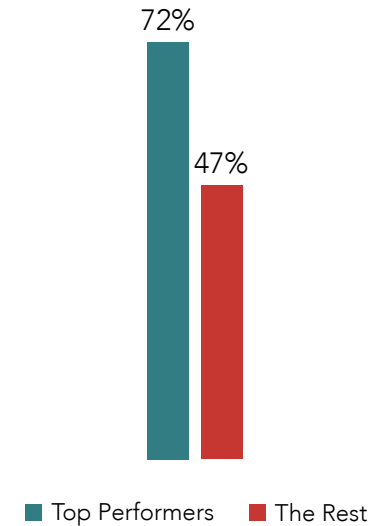
5. There's a Dramatic Difference in Win Rate between Top Performers and The Rest

The average win rate on proposed sales reported by sellers and sales managers is dramatically higher for Top Performers compared to The Rest. This validates and is consistent with the research on win rates of top performers we've conducted over the last several decades.²

Top Performers' win rate is 25 percentage points higher than The Rest.

Small improvements in win rate can have a big impact on sales results (see page 28).

AVERAGE PROPOSAL WIN RATE
% RESPONDENTS



² RAIN Group Center for Sales Research: *The Top-Performing Sales Organization*, *Top Performance in Sales Negotiation*, and *Virtual Selling Skills & Challenges*.

Executive Summary of Key Findings

6. Newer Sellers Get a Performance Boost from an Effective Manager

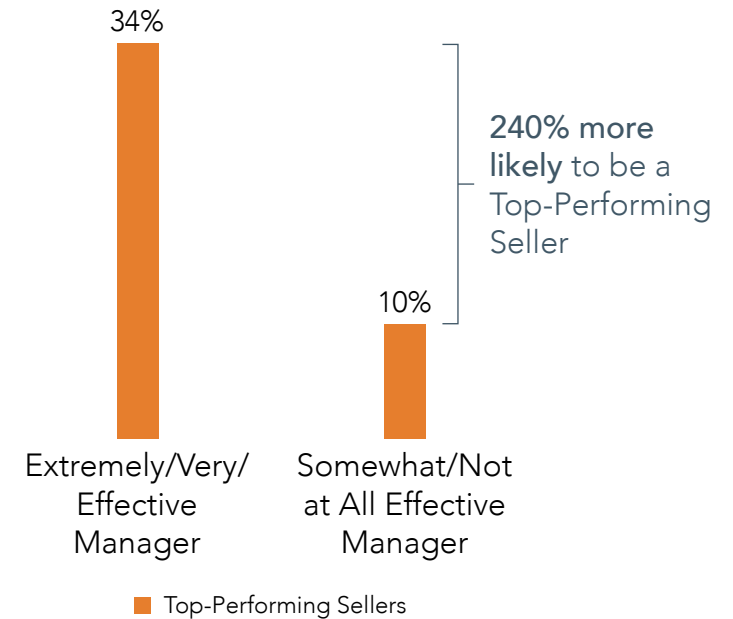
Sellers with less than five years' experience are 240% more likely to be Top Performers when they have an effective manager.

This is a major finding given the Great Resignation and the number of sellers switching jobs. For organizations hiring new talent, getting sellers up-to-speed and to full productivity as soon as possible is imperative.

Sales managers play a major role in influencing new sellers' likelihood of becoming Top Performers, so it's even more important to have effective sales managers in place to support seller performance.

SELLERS WITH LESS THAN 5 YEARS' EXPERIENCE

% RESPONDENTS



THE TOP-PERFORMING *SALES MANAGER*

Who Are the Top Performers?

The Top Performer group (which combines responses from Top-Performing Sales Managers and Top-Performing Sellers) represents 18.7% of survey respondents. The Rest, everyone else, represents 81.3% of total respondents.

	Top-Performing Sales Managers	Top-Performing Sellers	Commentary
Met annual sales goal	75% or more of sellers on their teams met annual goal	All Top-Performing Sellers met annual goal	While sellers had to meet their goal (following the conditions set below) to be in the Top Performer group, it isn't realistic for sales managers to have everyone meet their goal. We set the bar high at 75% of their team achieving goal.
Challenging sales goals Goals must have been set to be...	Extremely / very / challenging	Extremely / very / challenging	We didn't want to include sales managers in the Top Performer group whose teams achieved goals they perceived to be easy.
Win rate on proposed sales	Greater than 50%	Greater than 50%	High win rates on proposed sales make for an efficient and cost-effective sales force. More wins over fewer sellers drives greater profit and lower cost of selling.
Achieved premium pricing in line with value provided	Strongly / agree	Strongly / agree	We didn't want to include sales managers in the Top Performer group whose teams discounted their way to success, or won based on low prices.

Who Are the Top Performers?

We assessed the skills and behaviors of sales managers based on managers' responses, as well as those of sellers responding about their sales managers. We then examined:

- Managers whose sales teams are top performing compared with managers whose teams are not
- Top-Performing Sellers compared to other sellers

Both groups—sales managers and sellers—largely agree on what Top-Performing Sales Managers do, and what most separates Top Performers from The Rest.

We used the most significant findings in our data to organize the Top-Performing Sales Manager model (see page 15), and we share detail on our findings throughout the report.

Organizations want sales teams that meet goals in the face of challenging conditions with high win rates on opportunities and strong pricing. We now know what Top-Performing Sales Managers do to inspire and achieve this through their sales teams.



Note: We use the terms “managers of top-performing teams” and “Top-Performing Sales Managers” interchangeably in this report.

The Making of a Top-Performing Sales Manager

The Top-Performing Sales Manager Model: Rhythm, Roles, and Conversations

Based on this and other research conducted by the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research, along with two decades of fieldwork with clients, we've found that Top-Performing Sales Managers are better than other managers at:

- Delivering regular rhythm, frequency, and types of coaching
- Playing 10 sales management and coaching roles well
- Leading masterful sales management and coaching conversations

See the next page for a summary of top research takeaways and differences that define Top-Performing Sales Managers and set them apart from other managers.

Rhythm

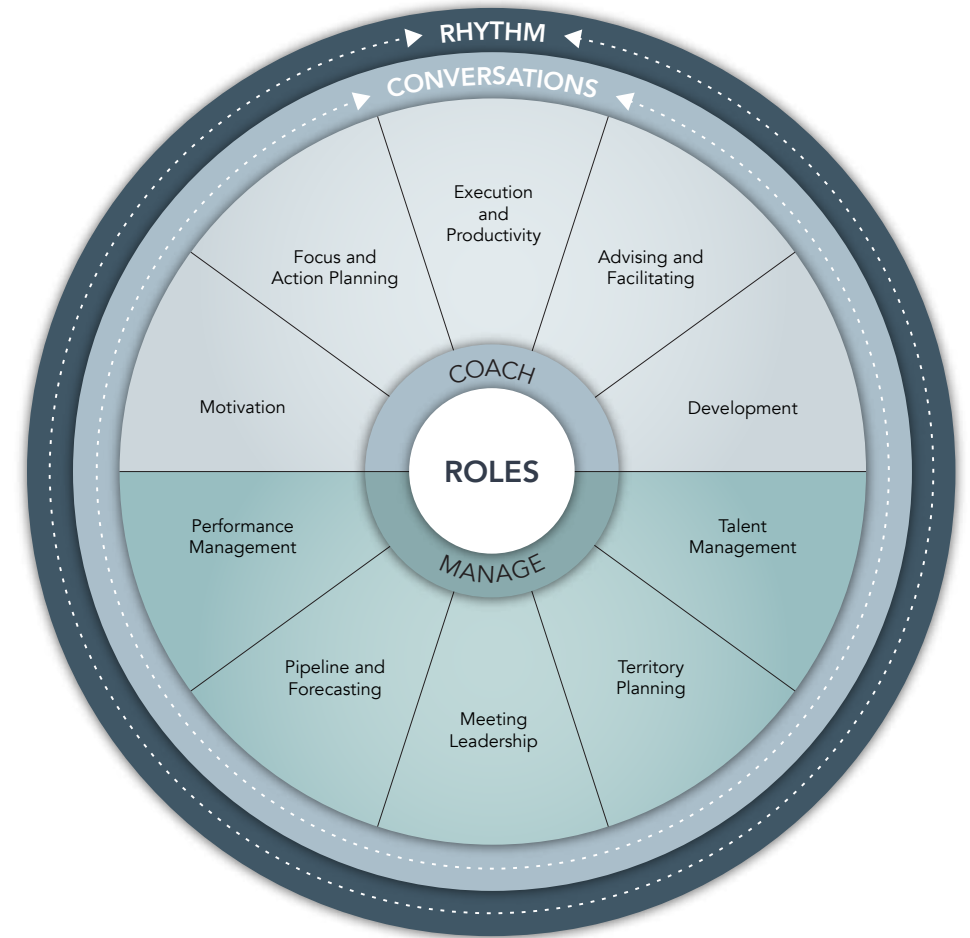
Top Performers are **51% more likely** to have regular ongoing coaching.

Conversations

Top Performers are **40% more likely** to be skilled at leading valuable coaching meetings.

Roles

The **10 roles (5 coaching-focused, 5 management-focused)** are all **statistically validated** as 10 critical areas where Top-Performing Sales Managers excel versus other managers.



Execution and Productivity

Top Performers are significantly more likely to be highly rated across all 9 major productivity areas analyzed, and **71% more likely** to be effective at motivating sellers for high productivity and performance

Focus and Action Planning

Top Performers are **41% more likely** to excel at helping sellers build meaningful goal and action plans

Advising and Facilitating

Top Performers more like to excel at coaching sellers to:

- **Lead great sales conversations (52%)**
- **Win sales opportunities (45%)**
- **Grow accounts (47%)**
- **Fill the pipeline (30%)**

Development

Top Performers are **37% more likely** to excel at coaching sellers to build sales skills; **#1 key driver** of sales manager effectiveness

Talent Management

Top Performers are **42% more likely** to excel at hiring sellers who become Top Performers

Territory Planning

Top Performers are **52% more likely** to excel at planning and analyzing how sellers should manage their territories

Meeting Leadership

Top Performers are **42% more likely** to excel at leading valuable sales team meetings

Motivation

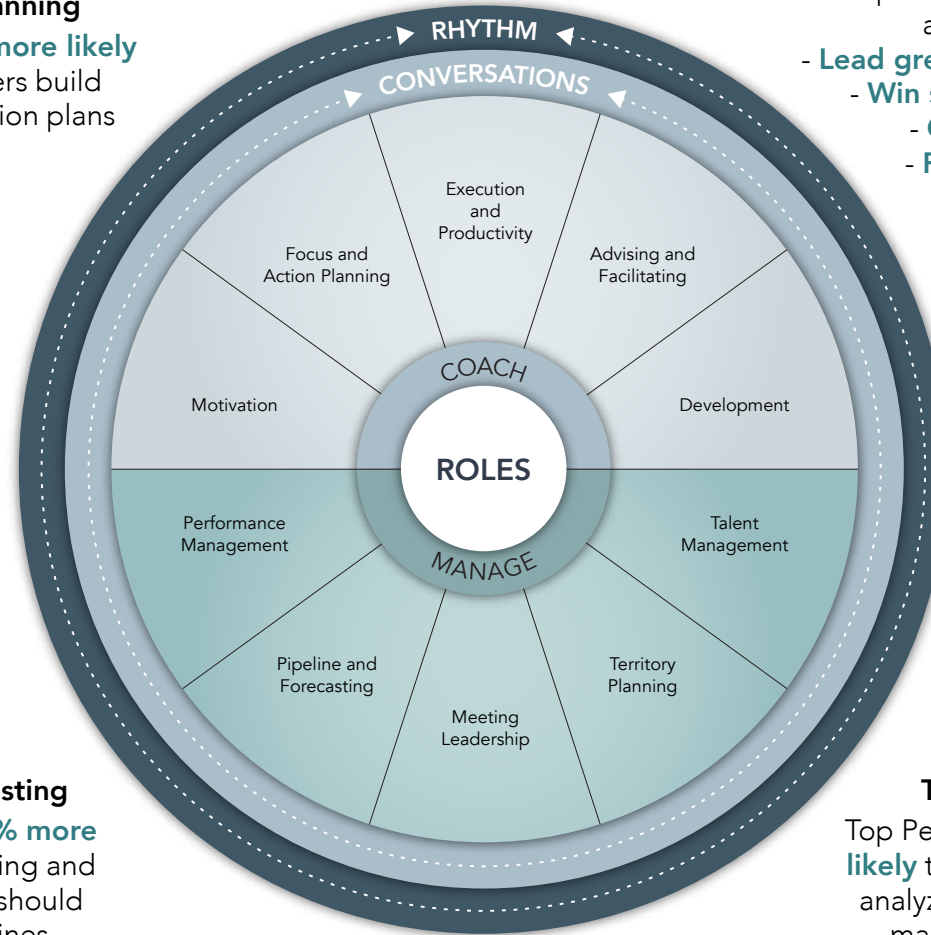
#1 skill of Top Performers

Performance Management

Top-Performing Sellers are **83% more likely** to rate their sales manager extremely/very effective at helping them achieve strong performance

Pipeline and Forecasting

Top Performers are **52% more likely** to excel at planning and analyzing how sellers should manage their pipelines



Coaching vs. Managing

First, what's the difference between a "coaching" role and a "management" role?

Coaching is done, and can only be done, directly with sellers. It's a two-way interaction that happens collaboratively. Coaching topics are the shared responsibility of the seller and manager.

Management is an area where managers organize, execute, and monitor structurally in order to drive performance. Sellers *affect* managers' vision, decision making, and actions in these areas, but management topics are primarily the responsibility of the manager.

Tapping the Untapped Opportunity

We say that the sales manager impact on seller motivation and productivity cannot be overstated. In fact, it's *understated in most organizations*. While seller productivity is often an area of discussion, it's mostly in the vein of providing technologies that speed up specific seller activities.

Durable, determined, and systematic focus on helping sellers *work more productively* is rare. Yet, as the research indicates, and our work with clients confirms, motivation and productivity are highly correlated with sales performance.



Coaching vs. Managing

Top-Performing Sales Managers motivate sellers to be extremely productive as a primary thrust of their role.

The importance of managers motivating their sellers to achieve top performance, and be as productive as possible as *individuals*, cannot be overstated. Motivation is not only highly correlated with top performance, but also the biggest difference between Top Performers and The Rest.

We know from other research that Top-Performing Sellers are highly productive. But do these sellers bring intrinsic motivation and productivity to the table themselves, or does the manager play a significant role in motivation?

Resoundingly, it's the latter. Previous research shows that sellers who set challenging goals, manage their top priorities for action, are accountable to their commitments, avoid distraction, get as much done as they can each day, and get back on track when they're derailed, are much more likely to achieve top performance.³

We now know that the sales manager is the linchpin in making sure motivation and productivity happens systematically across the sales team.

Coaching and management work in concert.

Do coaching-focused activities have an outsized effect versus sales management-focused activities? Meaning, if sales managers are highly effective coaches but not as effective in the core management areas, are their sellers still likely to be Top Performers?

And, vice versa: if a manager isn't the best coach, but is highly skilled and effective at the management components of their jobs, are their sellers still likely to be Top Performers?

In other words, should we focus on driving management over coaching, coaching over management, or the combination?

Answer: it's the combination.

Sales managers have to wear both manager and coach hats, and play the roles in each area well, if they want to achieve top performance.

³ *The Extreme Productivity Benchmark Report*, RAIN Group Center for Sales Research.

The Formula for Top Sales Performance

Effective Manager + Regular Coaching + Effective Training

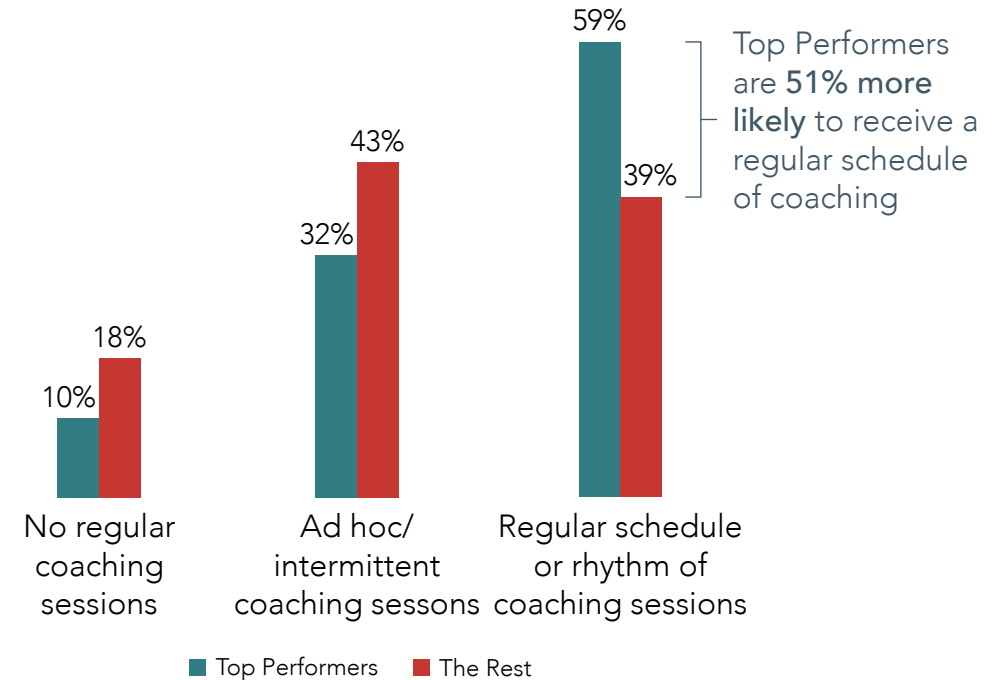
The combination of having an effective manager, a regular coaching rhythm, and effective training correlates significantly to top sales performance.

Top-Performing Sellers and Teams Receive Regular, On-Going Coaching

According to sales managers and sellers, Top Performers are 1.5x more likely to receive coaching on a regular, ongoing schedule. Further, Top-Performing Sellers are more likely to devote more of their time to being coached each week compared to other sellers. We also know that Top-Performing Sales Managers are more likely to be skilled in the various coaching conversation types (see page 22).

Takeaway: Top Performers receive regular coaching, as well as higher-quality coaching.

FREQUENCY OF COACHING RECEIVED
% RESPONDENTS



The Formula for Top Sales Performance

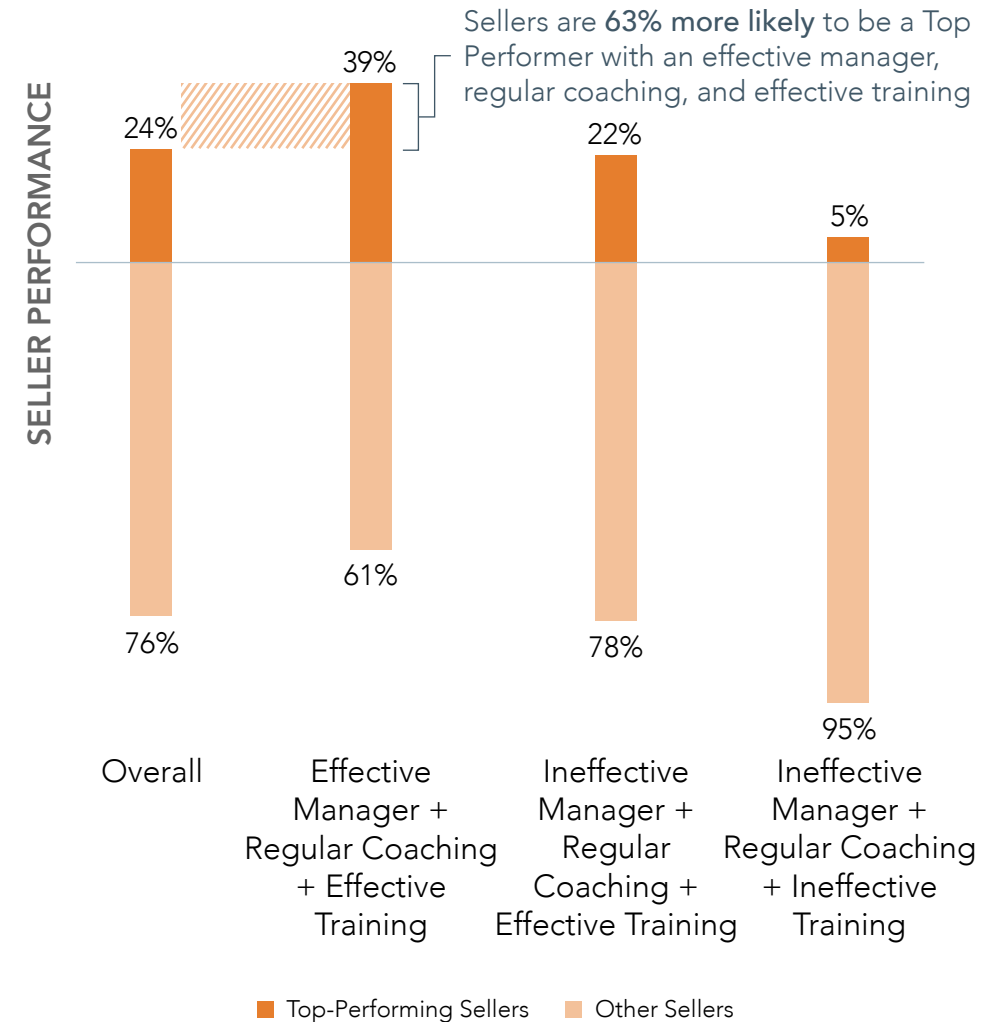
Effective Manager + Regular Coaching + Effective Sales Training Significantly Increases Likelihood of Seller Top Performance

We analyzed the relationship between top performance and a combination of three factors: sales manager effectiveness, sales training effectiveness, and regular schedule of coaching.

Here's what we learned:

- The combination of all three is exceptionally powerful.** Sellers with an **effective manager, regular coaching, and effective sales training** are 1.6x more likely to be Top Performers (39%) compared to sellers overall (24%). This is a major finding that shows the importance of getting these three areas right at an organization.
- Effective training is a linchpin.** When sales training is effective, but the manager isn't, Top Performer likelihood drops somewhat but is supported by effective training. In other words, sellers can be successful with strong training *despite* their managers.
- Low manager effectiveness plus ineffective training is a death knell.** Performance drops way off when both the manager and the training are ineffective. Even when the manager coaches regularly, if the seller perceives their manager to be ineffective, the seller is unlikely to take the manager's advice. Indeed, given that situation, there's a case to be made that the seller *shouldn't* take that manager's advice.

IMPACT OF MANAGER + COACHING + SALES TRAINING ON SELLER PERFORMANCE
% RESPONDENTS



The Formula for Top Sales Performance

And if sellers' training is ineffective, they won't have the skills to compensate for their lack of an effective sales manager.

Takeaway: Effective Sales Management + Regular Coaching Rhythm + Effective Sales Training correlates highly with top sales performance.

But We Hire The Best...

Sometimes we're told that the strategy of an organization is to hire historically top-performing sellers or rising stars from other organizations, pay them handsomely, and let them do their thing.

Take note if this is your strategy: without strong training and coaching, top performance is still likely to be elusive. The pattern we often see emerge with this strategy is high turnover. Great sellers get frustrated when there's a lack of investment in them and a lack of coaching support and ultimately make the decision to leave.



SELLERS' HIGHLIGHT

Sellers Achieve Higher Skill Levels with Regular Coaching from a Top-Performing Sales Manager

For sellers, we studied 85 skills and behaviors across 12 categories. We analyzed the differences between sellers who receive ad hoc or intermittent coaching versus a regular, ongoing schedule of coaching.

We found that:

- A regular ongoing schedule or rhythm of coaching sessions is positively correlated with higher seller skill ratings in all categories.
- When Top-Performing Sales Managers deliver regular, ongoing coaching, the seller skills ratings are even higher.

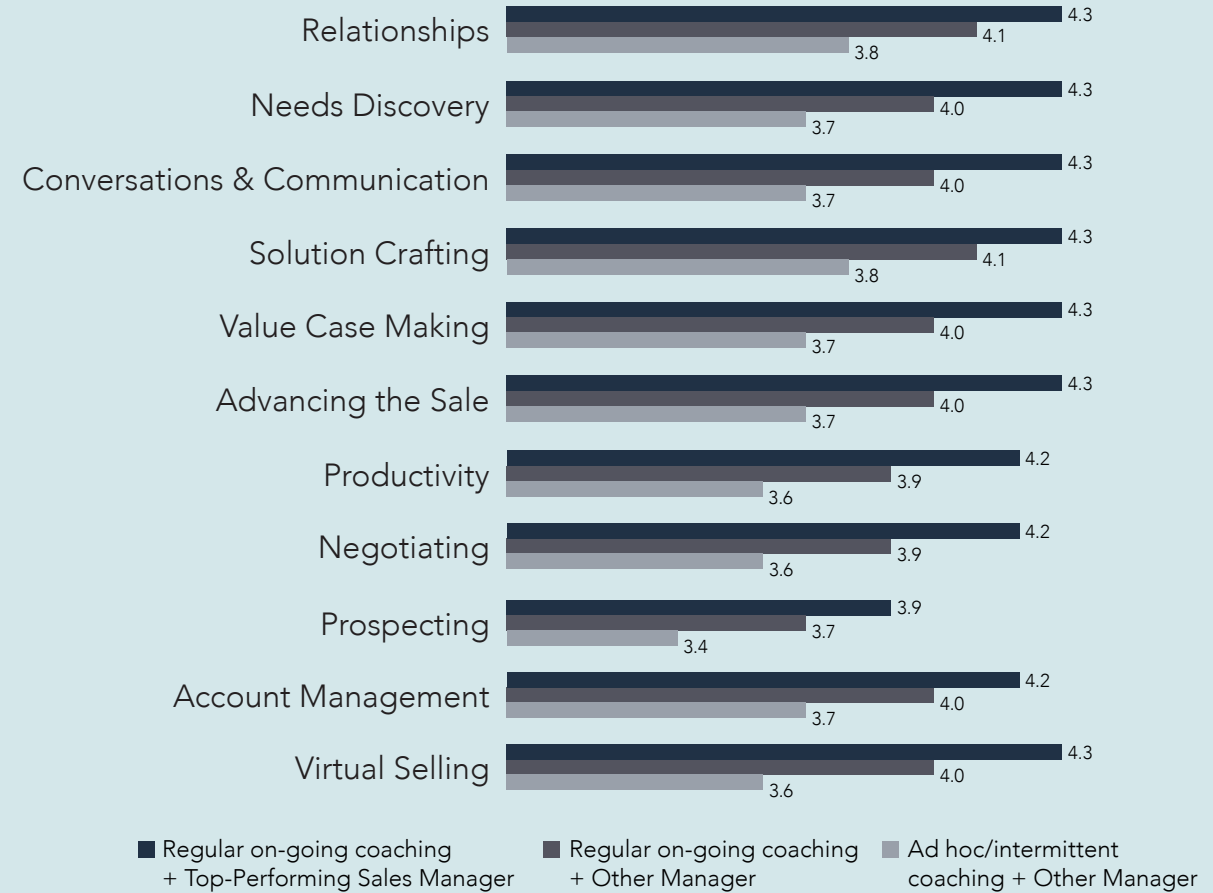
This makes sense because, according to Top-Performing Sales Managers and Sellers alike, sales managers:

- Are more likely to focus on coaching sellers to build their selling skills
- Are more likely to coach on a regular schedule, and specifically, on these skills (see page 22 for examples).

Takeaway: With a regular schedule of ongoing coaching, sellers are more likely to have better skills. And if they're coached by a Top-Performing Sales Manager, they're more likely to have even better skills.

SELLERS HAVE HIGHER AVERAGE SKILL RATINGS WITH REGULAR SCHEDULE OF COACHING ACCORDING TO MANAGERS

(5-POINT SCALE)



The Skills of Top-Performing Sales Managers

We asked sellers to rate their sales managers, and sales managers to rate themselves, on sales management and coaching skills. Top Performers are significantly more likely to report stronger skills in 13 of 15 key areas compared to The Rest.⁴

What's most notable here is that the #1 management and coaching skill Top Performers excel at—and the #1 difference between Top Performers and The Rest—is the manager's ability to motivate sellers for high productivity and performance. In fact, Top Performers are 71% more likely to have a manager who does this.

Leading effective coaching conversations, deal coaching, hiring sellers likely to become top performers, managing territories, etc., are frequently part of training and expected of sales managers.

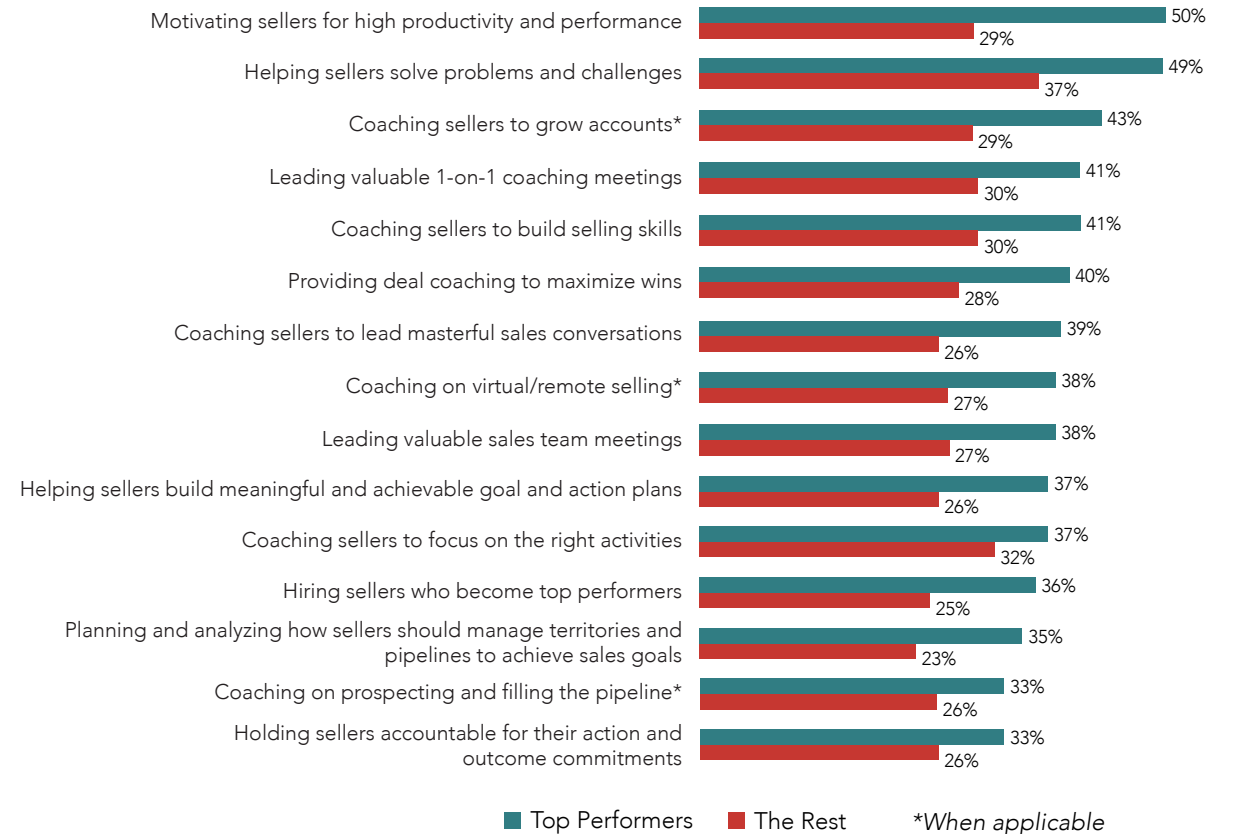
But too often, training and coaching doesn't focus on helping managers and sellers improve their productivity. Organizations need to increase their attention to helping sellers and sales managers be maximally productive.

When we looked closer at the most motivating sales managers, we found:

- Based on **seller** responses about their managers, each of these manager skills and behaviors is positively correlated with motivating sellers for high productivity and performance.
- Based on **sales manager** responses, Top-Performing Sales Managers had stronger skills in the same sales management and coaching areas.

Takeaway: The skills of Top-Performing Sales Managers are an order of magnitude stronger than The Rest. Organizations that focus on developing these skills are more likely to achieve top performance.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TOP PERFORMERS AND THE REST % STRONGLY AGREE



⁴ The difference between Top Performers and The Rest is statistically significant for 13 out of 15 skills; for the remaining two skills (coaching on prospecting and coaching to focus on the right activities), while the percentages for Top Performers are higher, they're not statistically significant.

Top-Performing Sales Managers Receive Better Training

Top-Performing Sales Managers have stronger skills and also receive more effective training themselves, which correlates to team performance.

Takeaway: Sales training goes beyond training your sellers. Don't overlook your sales managers. Make sure training focuses on the right mix of topics.

SELLERS' HIGHLIGHT

Top-Performing Sales Managers and Sellers See (Mostly) Eye to Eye

Top Performers are largely in agreement on the skills where Top-Performing Sales Managers excel. However, in two areas, managers are significantly more likely to report they excel compared to how Top-Performing Sellers assess their managers:

- **Helping sellers solve problems:** 56% managers vs. 43% sellers
- **Coaching sellers to build selling skills:** 49% managers vs. 33% sellers

Takeaway: Even if managers believe they do a good job of helping sellers solve problems and challenges and build skills, they need to do more here to be seen similarly by their teams.

SALES TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS

% RESPONDENTS



Confidence Plays a Major Role for Top-Performing Sales Managers

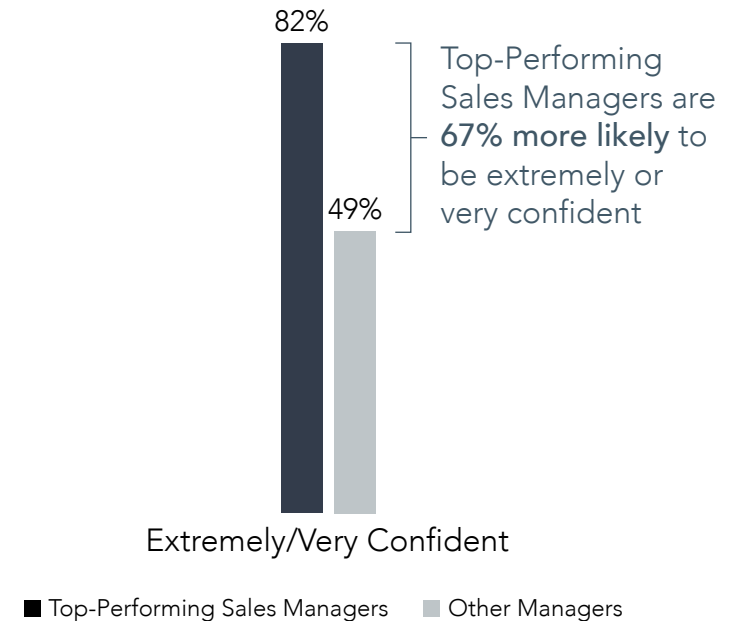
We asked managers: *how confident are you in your ability to help your direct reports achieve strong sales performance?* The difference between Top-Performing Sales Managers and others is stark.

Top-Performing Sales Managers are 67% more likely to be extremely or very confident compared to other managers when it comes to being able to help their direct reports achieve strong sales performance.

Top-Performing Sales Managers have the skills and employ the right behaviors to drive success. And they're confident they can do just that.

Takeaway: If you want sales managers to be Top Performers, measure and build their confidence.

SALES MANAGER CONFIDENCE IN ABILITY TO HELP SELLERS ACHIEVE STRONG SALES PERFORMANCE
% RESPONDENTS



Confidence Plays a Major Role for Top-Performing Sales Managers

What Influences Sales Manager Confidence?

We know that sales managers who are confident in their ability to help their direct reports are much more likely to be Top Performers.

This begs the question: are there key drivers of confidence? Skills and behaviors that, when developed and enhanced, contribute to higher levels of confidence for sales managers to help their sellers achieve success? And if so, what are they?⁵

The chart to the right provides the answers. To help your sales managers develop confidence, start by building their skills in these seven areas, ranging from coaching sellers to lead masterful conversations—which has the greatest impact on confidence, relative influence of 19% out of 100%—to proactively providing deal coaching to maximize wins—relative influence of 12% out of 100%.

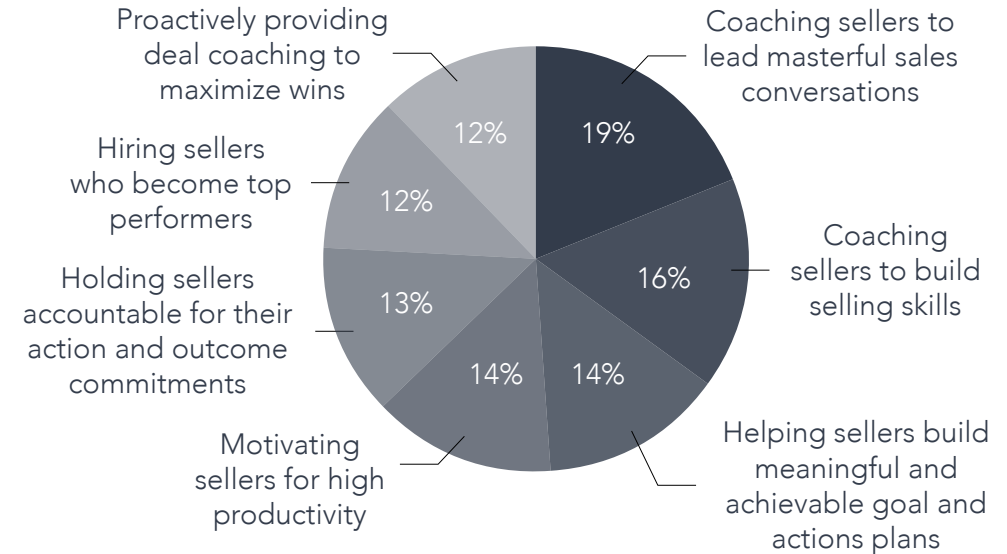
The first two key drivers have to do with skills coaching:

1. Coaching sellers to lead masterful sales conversations
2. Coaching sellers to build selling skills

⁵ To determine which skills and behaviors are most likely to influence a sales manager's confidence, we performed a key driver analysis using a statistical test for relative importance. That is, we assessed which skills are likely to drive changes in sales manager confidence.

7 KEY DRIVERS OF SALES MANAGER CONFIDENCE

% RELATIVE IMPORTANCE



The key driver analysis calculates each variable's relative weight and is shown as a series of percentages that add to 100%.

Confidence Plays a Major Role for Top-Performing Sales Managers

The next three key drivers have to do with helping sellers become more productive:

3. Helping sellers build meaningful and achievable goal and action plans
4. Motivating sellers for high productivity
5. Holding sellers accountable for their action and outcomes

Note how important the productivity factors are to sales manager confidence. Yet, few sales organizations explicitly link the development of their sellers and sales managers with developing behaviors for increased productivity. Clearly this is an important missing link (see callout on page 27).

Identifying these seven key drivers of sales manager confidence was a critical step in the development of the Top-Performing Sales Manager model. Follow the model to help your sales managers build their confidence and improve the likelihood of top performance.

Takeaways: Use the Top-Performing Sales Manager model to measure and build sales manager confidence.



Productivity: The Secret to Increased Sales Performance

We asked sales managers to assess their teams on nine productivity behaviors. We found that the teams of Top-Performing Sales Managers are significantly more likely to score higher on each compared to those of other managers.

Separately, we found that, according to Top-Performing Sellers, the #1 skill of their sales managers, and the greatest difference between Top-Performing Sales Managers and others, is that they *motivate sellers for high productivity and performance*.

But sales managers can't motivate for productivity and performance if they don't possess those skills and know how to implement them. When managers are skilled here, they can not only help sellers develop productive behaviors, but also be more productive themselves and use their time better.

Takeaway: Productivity is seldom a central focus of sales management and sales training programs. This must change if the goal of training is to strengthen sales performance and results.

SALES TEAM PRODUCTIVITY RATINGS
5-POINT SCALE SORTED BY PERCENTAGE GAP



The Win Rate Difference

The average win rate on proposed sales reported by Top Performers is dramatically higher than The Rest.

This validates and is consistent with the research on the win rates of top performers we've conducted over the last few decades.⁶

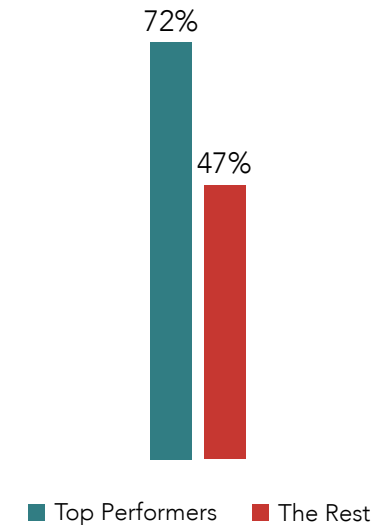
Top-Performing Sales Manager skills correlate significantly with better sales performance results. Take the impact of deal coaching on win rate, for example.

All sales managers provide deal coaching at statistically similar frequencies (44% of Top-Performing Sales Managers provide it compared to 42% of other managers), but Top-Performing Sellers are 63% more likely to report their manager excels at providing deal coaching to maximize wins.

While a regular coaching schedule matters, Top Performers get *better* deal coaching.

Takeaway: Top-Performing Sales Managers have better skills in the areas that lead to higher win rates on proposed sales and achieve higher win rates.

AVERAGE PROSPOSAL WIN RATE
% RESPONDENTS



⁶ RAIN Group Center for Sales Research: *The Top-Performing Sales Organization, Top Performance in Sales Negotiation, and Virtual Selling Skills & Challenges.*

The Impact of Win Rate Is Substantial

To see just how big a difference an increase in win rate can have for a business, let's look at some simple math and examples with just a *small* change in win rate—increasing in this example from 44% to 52%.

Imagine a company or division has 200 sellers. Each seller submits a proposal for approximately 25 opportunities per year—that's about 5,000 total proposals made by the organization—with the average sale being \$150,000.

At a win rate of 44%, the organization's annual revenue is \$330,000,000. At 52% it's \$390,000,000, or \$60,000,000 higher. And that's just what happens by increasing the win rate. That's 18% growth added to the whole company without adding any headcount—just by increasing the win rate.



WIN RATE SCENARIO—\$150K AVERAGE SALE

**25 proposals/person annually
or 5,000 proposals total**

Average Sale = \$150K

	Proposal Win Rate (Company)	
	44%	52%
Proposals Won	2,200	2,600
Avg. Sale	\$150K	\$150K
Annual Revenue	\$330M	\$390M

+18% annual revenue
by increasing the
proposal win rate

However, there's more to it than simply increasing win rate.

When sellers uncover needs thoroughly, craft the right solutions, inspire buyers with ideas, and communicate value persuasively (all areas where Top-Performing Sales Managers excel at coaching), they can increase their average size of sale considerably.

In our example, if we increase the average size of sale by just \$15,000 to \$165,000, the revenue jumps to \$429,000,000, an increase of almost \$100,000,000.

You can also consider the impact here if you're an individual seller. If you close 44% of proposals, you win 11 sales and sell \$1,650,000 for the year. If your win rate works its way up to 52%, you win 13 sales for \$1,950,000 in revenue. And if you increase the average size of sale as per our example, your annual sales shoot up to \$2,145,000.

The effect of even incremental improvements in win rate is dramatic.

WIN RATE SCENARIO—\$165K AVERAGE SALE



	Proposal Win Rate (Company)	
	44%	52%
Proposals Won	11	13
Avg. Sale	\$150K	\$165K
Annual Revenue	\$1.65M	\$2.15M

	Proposal Win Rate (Company)	
	44%	52%
Proposals Won	2,200	2,600
Avg. Sale	\$150K	\$165K
Annual Revenue	\$330M	\$429M

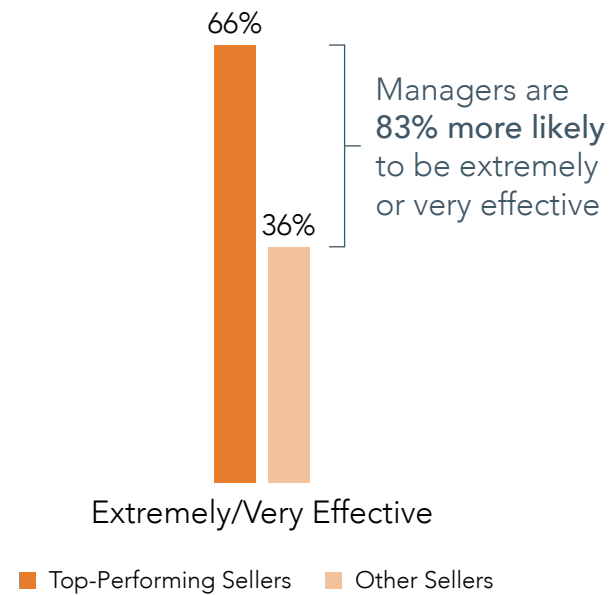
+100M

The Benefits of Skilled Managers

We asked sellers: *how would you rate your sales manager's effectiveness helping you achieve strong performance?* Top-Performing Sellers are 83% more likely to rate their sales managers extremely or very effective.

But what is it that makes a sales manager most effective in the eyes of sellers?

SALES MANAGER EFFECTIVENESS ACCORDING TO SELLERS
% RESPONDENTS



The Benefits of Skilled Managers

Key Drivers of Sales Manager Effectiveness—According to Sellers

Our analysis identified six sales management and coaching skills as key drivers of sales manager effectiveness according to sellers.⁷

For sales managers to be seen as effective, they should be skilled in these areas ranging from leading valuable 1-on-1 coaching meetings—which has the greatest influence, with a relative importance of 21% out of 100%—to coaching sellers to lead masterful sales conversations (relative importance of 13% out of 100%).

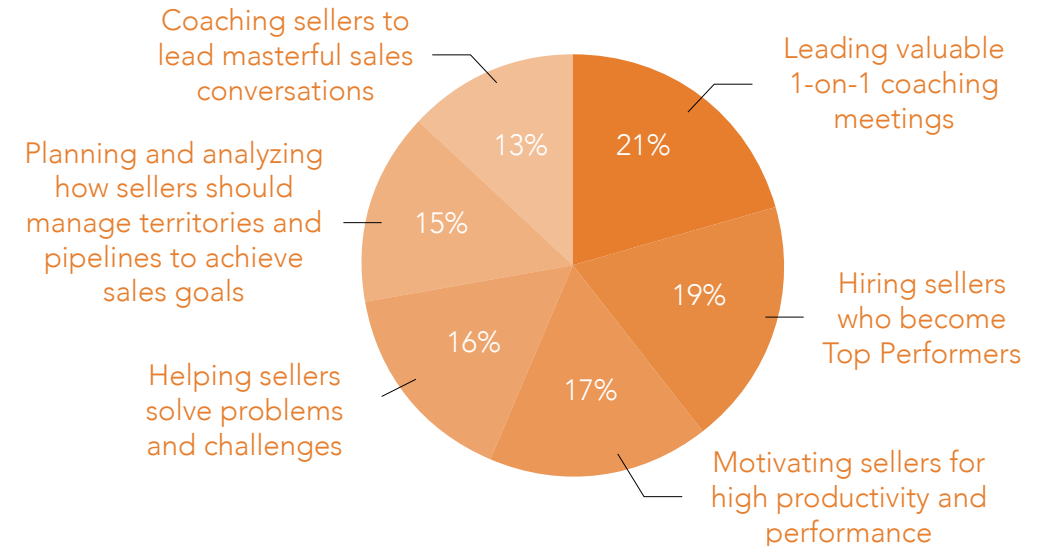
Across our analysis, looking at sales managers’ responses, sellers’ responses, and combined responses, the same factors kept bubbling to the top as important:

- Leading valuable 1-on-1 coaching meetings
- Motivating sellers for high productivity and performance
- Helping sellers solve problems and challenges
- Coaching sellers to lead masterful sales conversations

The impact of these areas, as we have noted throughout this report, is exceptionally strong. Thus, each of these key drivers is included in the Top-Performing Sales Manager model.

Takeaway: Sales managers who develop their skills in these areas are more likely to be seen as a valuable resource by the sellers they manage and coach to boost sales performance.

6 KEY DRIVERS OF SALES MANAGER EFFECTIVENESS ACCORDING TO SELLERS
% RELATIVE IMPORTANCE



The key driver analysis calculates each variable’s relative weight and is shown as a series of percentages that add to 100% (when not rounded).

⁷ To determine which skills and behaviors are most likely to influence a sales manager’s effectiveness in the eyes of sellers, we performed a key driver analysis using a statistical test for relative importance. That is, we assessed which skills are likely to drive changes in manager effectiveness. Note that along with these six key drivers, 15 out of 15 sales management and coaching skills and behaviors we studied also correlated to manager effectiveness and are included in the Top-Performing Sales Manager model.

The Benefits of Skilled Managers

Newer Sellers Get a Performance Boost from an Effective Manager

Sellers with less than 5 years' experience are **240% more likely to be Top Performers** when they have an effective manager.

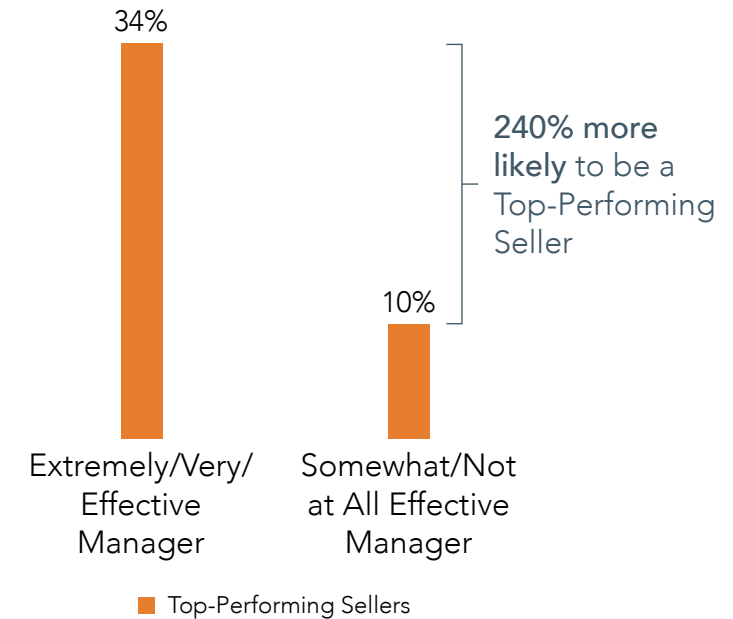
Hiring new sellers and shortening the time to performance is typically a key focus of sales leaders and enablement teams. Yet the velocity of sellers changing jobs has only increased since the Great Resignation began. While this may fluctuate a bit with economic cycles, it's likely to remain both an evergreen and sticky challenge.

A major component of solving the challenge is the effectiveness of sales managers. Based on our analysis, we now know that managers play a major role in influencing newer sellers' likelihood of becoming Top Performers within acceptable time frames.

Takeaway: For companies onboarding less experienced sellers, it's important to have effective sales managers in place to support seller performance.

SELLERS WITH LESS THAN 5 YEARS' EXPERIENCE

% RESPONDENTS



A Roadmap for Your Sales Managers

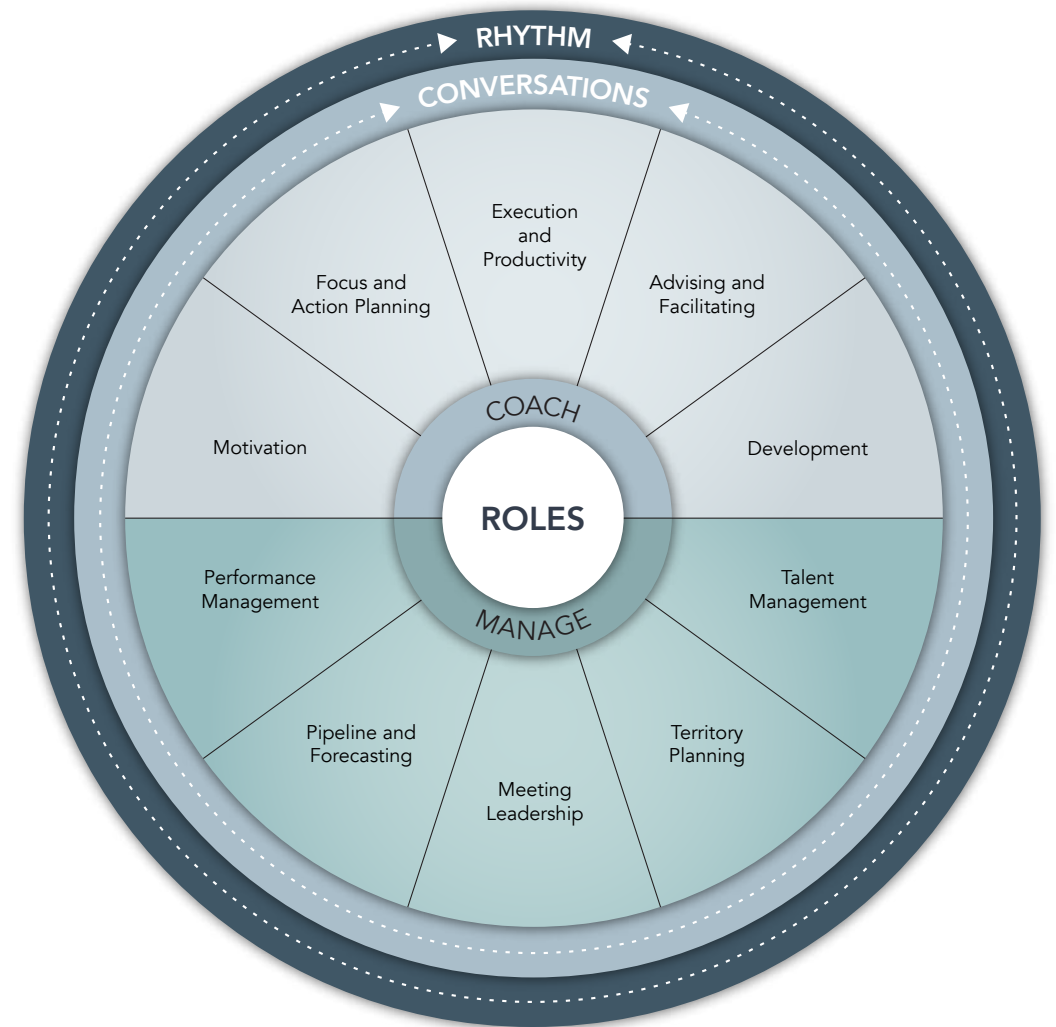
As we noted in the introduction, we know that sales management and coaching is a key area where Top-Performing Sales Organizations are drastically different than The Rest.

Now, with this research, we've been able to take what the best sales managers and coaches do differently than the rest, how they work with sellers, and the mix of skills and behaviors that correlate with top performance, and map these skills and behaviors to a model that organizations can use to develop their own Top-Performing Sales Managers.

In summary, to develop Top-Performing Sales Managers, focus on:

- Rhythm
- Roles
- Conversations

THE TOP-PERFORMING SALES MANAGERSM



Research Methodology and Demographics

The data shared in this report was collected in our *Skills and Behaviors of Top-Performing Sales Managers and Sellers* research. The RAIN Group Center for Sales Research conducted this global study to better understand what it takes to be a Top-Performing Sales Manager or Seller.

Data was collected from 1,004 respondents (624 sales managers and 380 sellers) via online survey in late 2021 and analyzed in 2022. Respondents were invited to participate via online links sent by the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research, as well as by partners.

Data was analyzed through multiple lenses, including what sales managers of top-performing teams do differently than other managers, which skills and behaviors are correlated with top performance, which are key drivers of sales manager confidence, and which are key drivers of manager effectiveness.

OVERALL RESEARCH DEMOGRAPHICS

Role	% of Total	Geography	% of Total
Sellers	38%	Americas	54%
Sales Managers	29%	EMEA	29%
Sales Managers Who Also Sell	33%	Asia-Pacific	16%
Industry	% of Total	Number of Sellers	% of Total
Business and Professional Services	25%	Less than 100	38%
Technology	26%	100 to 999	33%
Pharmaceuticals/Biotech/Medical Devices	23%	1,000+	29%
Other	26%	Gross Annual Sales	% of Total
		Less than \$10 Million	34%
		10 Million to \$250 Million	35%
		More than \$250 Million	32%

TOP PERFORMER DEMOGRAPHICS

Industry	% of Total
Top Performers are distributed similarly across industry groups.	
Business and Professional Services	26%
Technology	27%
Pharmaceuticals/Biotech/Medical Devices	26%
Other Industries	21%

Geography	% of Total
Top Performers are distributed across geographies.	
Americas	46%
EMEA	28%
Asia-Pacific	26%

Number of Sellers
Top Performers are less likely to be found in organizations with fewer than 100 sellers, but not dramatically so. This makes sense as smaller organizations are less likely to have the full landscape of resources, such as sales enablement, to support teams and training.

Training Top-Performing Sales Managers

Drive Change from the Top with Sales Management and Coaching Training

As we shared in this report, managing a sales team is one of the most difficult—but exceptionally important—roles in any company:

- Top-Performing Sellers are 83% more likely to report having an extremely or very effective manager
- Sellers with less than 5 years' experience are 240% more likely to be a Top-Performing Seller when they have an effective manager

Sales managers hold the keys to unlocking sales performance, yet most don't have the skills to do their jobs effectively.

RAIN Group's RAIN Sales Coaching training will give your leaders the skills to lead remarkable sales team meetings, help sellers consistently exceed sales targets, and coach to top performance.

Your managers will learn to:

- Lead masterful, collaborative sales coaching conversations
- Build 90-day priority action plans for sellers to drive change and increase success
- Ignite their teams' productivity, maximize motivation, and reduce distractions
- Build capability development into their ongoing coaching rhythm
- Track and communicate progress, achievements, and results

[Click here to request a complimentary consultation](#) →



RAIN Group Delivers World-Class Sales Training

- Modular, multi-modal, and purpose-built for the **modern learner**.
- Unique approach to driving **behavior change** through training we call Execution Assurance.
- Focused on driving the **business results** important to you.
- A **transformational experience** that ensures the development, adoption, and implementation of new skills.
- Action-oriented **coaching** prepares sellers for real situations and provides direct feedback.

About RAIN Group

Drive Transformational Change through Award-Winning Sales Training

We help organizations:

- Enhance sales capability with award-winning sales training
- Design and execute strategic account management initiatives
- Increase effectiveness of sales management and coaching

Best IP: We study buying and selling relentlessly through the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research. Our research and field work allows us to create industry-leading intellectual property to help our clients achieve the greatest success.

Best Education System: We use the best education approaches, methods, and technologies to make training work, stick, and transfer to the job.

Best Results: We make it our mission to drive value and achieve the highest client satisfaction through excellence in quality and producing transformational results for our clients.

