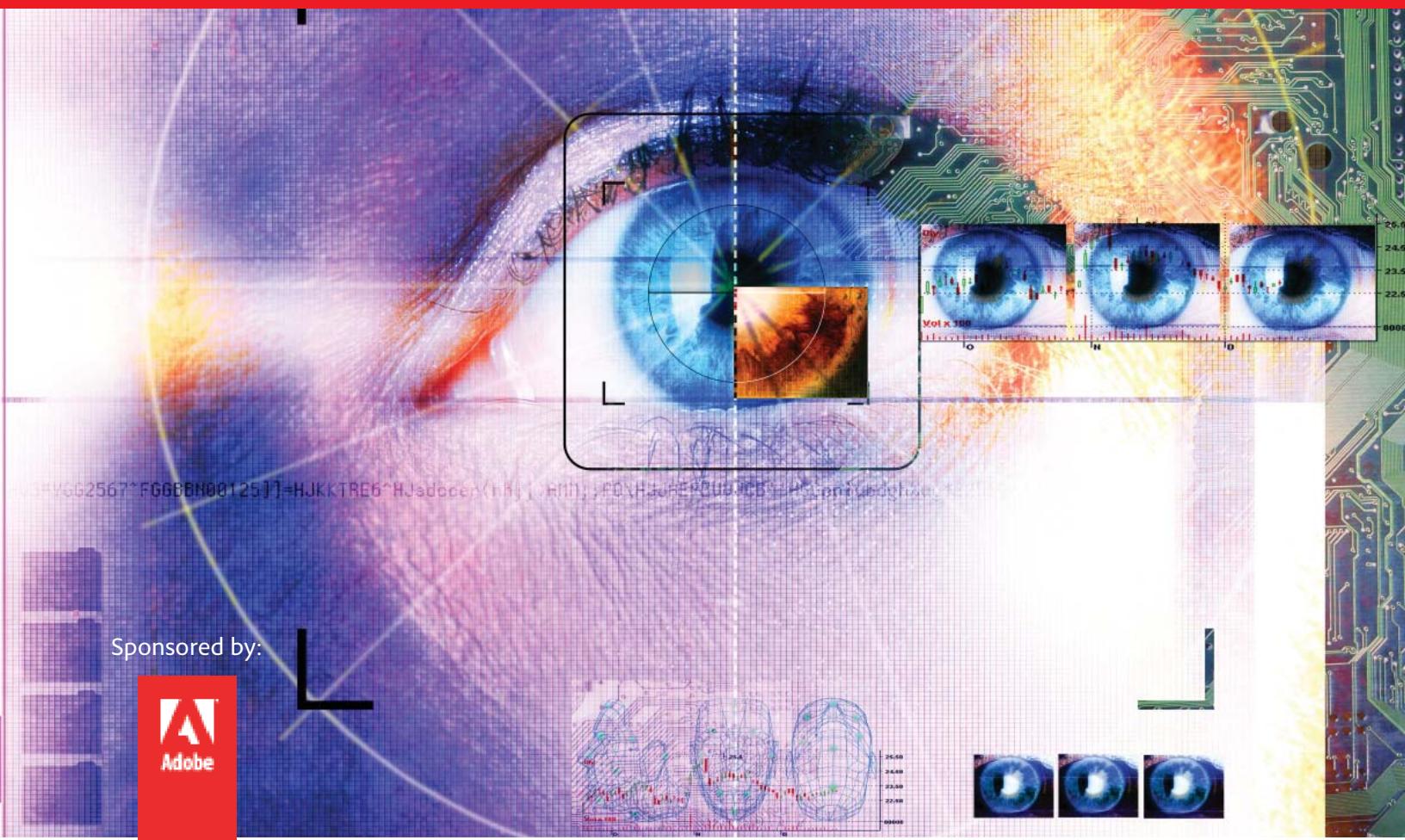


SellingPower

The Transformation of Enterprise Sales Training

How new eLearning tools cut costs and improve results

By Henry Canaday



The Enterprise Sales-Management Challenge

In today's economic environment, training a global sales force is even more challenging for enterprise organizations. To remain competitive, large companies need to continually train customer-facing employees and channel partners on products, the technology, and selling skills and techniques. What gets in the way are the expansion of worldwide sales teams, the continuous evolution of channel partnerships, rapidly changing markets, and a constant stream of new product introductions. Sales management must transform traditional training methods and find more effective solutions to deploy sales training in a timely and cost-effective manner, providing sales reps with the relevant information they need without taking too much time away from selling efforts.

A \$20 Billion Investment with Uncertain ROI

According to the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD), American companies spend about \$20 billion a year on sales training. Half of that money is spent on selling skills, and the other half is spent on product, company, and industry knowledge. A large portion of the training investment goes into training newly hired salespeople. ASTD estimates that 37 percent of sales reps receive 16 days or more of sales training during their first year on the job.

What's astonishing is that the majority of all sales training initiatives are not associated with the metrics that allow sales executives to accurately assess the ROI of their sales training investment. The typical measurement of sales training effectiveness consists of counting "butts in seats and smiley sheets." For this reason, CFOs tend to cut sales-training budgets during an economic downturn.

As the delivery of sales training shifts from the traditional classroom format to a blended model that includes online training, enterprise companies are able to create a culture of measurement that shifts the focus from measuring activities to measuring results. Explains *Selling Power* magazine founder and publisher Gerhard Gschwandtner, "Improving skills and knowledge is a means to an end. The top priority of sales trainers should not be improving skills and knowledge; it should

not be training methodology. Their primary focus should be on improved business results. If we fail to link training to business impact, we're sabotaging business progress."

Shifting from Traditional Training Methods

During the recent recession, enterprise organizations have broken the time-honored tradition of flying their entire sales force to one location for a multiday training-and-motivation rally. Market leaders, including Oracle and SAP, have moved their annual sales meeting and training events online, using the many advantages of a virtual learning environment and saving millions of dollars in travel expenses. Such companies as ADP and UPS have created blended-learning and coaching programs that are closely linked to business metrics.

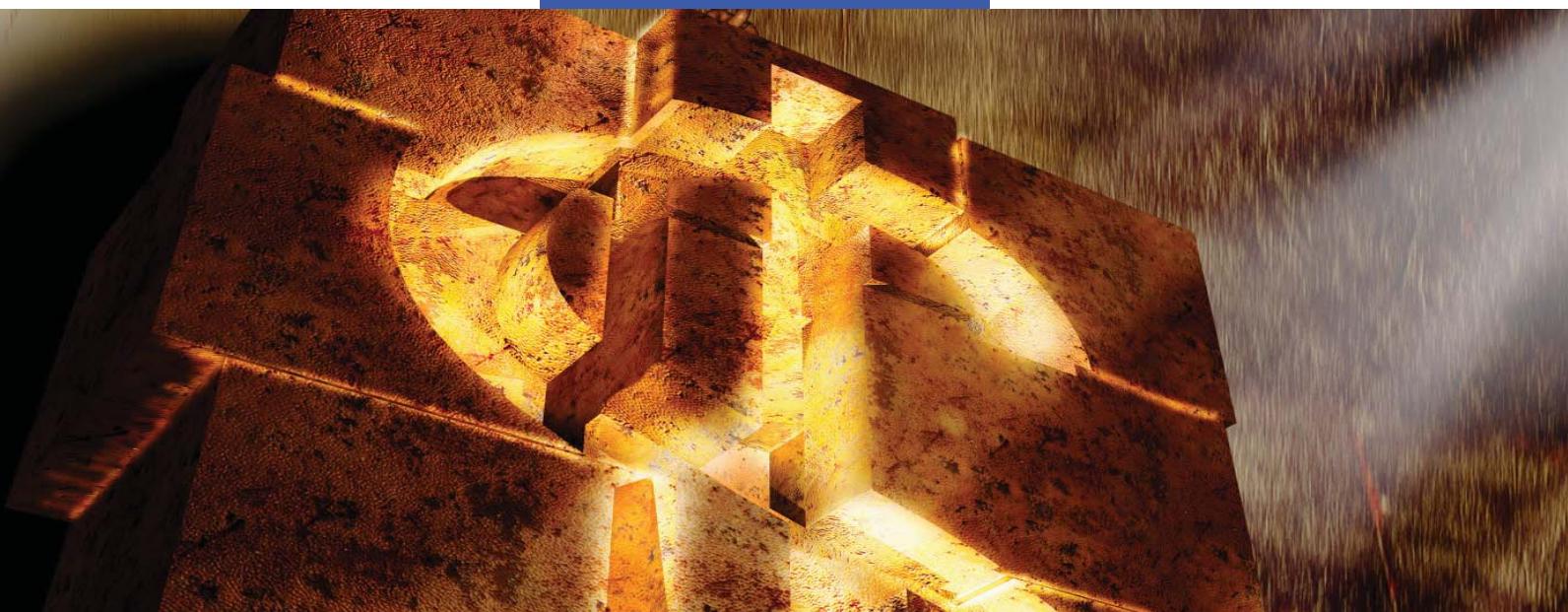
Ken Powell, VP of sales learning and performance at ADP, said in a *Selling Power* article, "Salespeople don't want to sit in a classroom listening to a sales manager or a sales trainer lecture them on hypothetical sales situations that may never happen in the salesperson's lifetime." The old "Here is how I made a lot of sales [years ago]; do as I do and you will be successful, too" approach to sales training is going to drive salespeople to check their BlackBerrys or iPhones while tuning their trainers out.

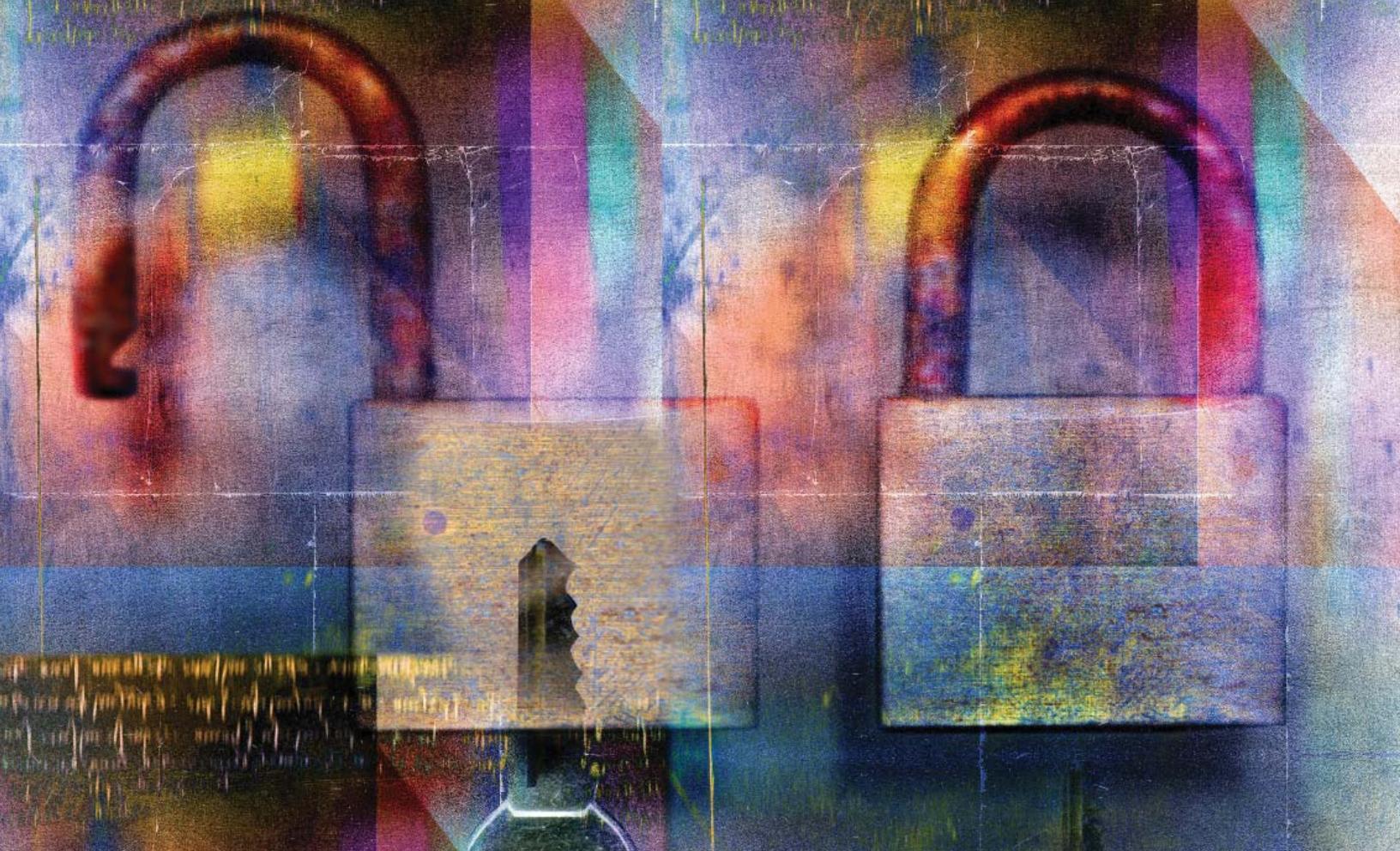
Delivery methods for enterprise sales training is also shifting because of changes in the speed of business and how and when customers want to buy. For example, the skills that salespeople needed during the recession has shifted from consultative selling to provocative selling. Commoditization has put greater pressure on salespeople to sell value over price, and price pressures have forced salespeople to make the difficult choice between price cutting and closing fewer sales. Many companies have scrambled to upgrade their salespeople's negotiation skills.

The increasing presence of the Millennial generation in the workforce (those who were born between 1975 and 1995) also influences how enterprise sales leaders are choosing to deploy sales training. These new team members are more technologically savvy; they multitask, shifting quickly from typing on their notebooks to texting, all while listening to music and occasionally sending out a tweet or checking for new

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American Society of Training and
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Steve Bamberger, Training Manager, Toshiba America Business Solutions

messages on Facebook. Millennials tend to be more comfortable with, and in some cases prefer, learning online.

Best Practices: How Enterprise Companies Conduct Sales Training Today

Major enterprises have started to respond to the rapidly changing business environment with a blend of in-person sales training and eLearning solutions. Toshiba America Business Solutions (TABS), which distributes, markets, and sells such products as copiers, fax machines, multifunction printers, and network controllers, trains its own reps, as well as those of its dealers in the United States, Mexico, Latin America, and the Caribbean markets. But in-person training methods proved expensive and not always effective. Field reps often received critical information too late, and an outdated Web-conferencing application could not handle both simultaneous and on-demand training sessions for sales teams operating in different time zones.

TABS introduced Adobe Connect to its existing training process and quickly reported positive results. "Adobe Connect provided a huge advantage, because it incorporates PowerPoint, videos for Adobe Flash Player, and animation," explains training manager Steve Bamberger. "Our training has reached new levels of effectiveness and efficiency."

The new method of training has proven so effective that TABS has replaced a seven-hour, in-person Six Sigma course with three, 45-minute, self-paced training modules made using Adobe Connect. TABS has also used Adobe Connect to make prerecorded, online workshops available to its field reps and dealers at any time. This has allowed its sales team members to advance their selling skills without any interruption in their sales schedules.

"We schedule quick Web meetings that all attend, no matter where they are, and then [they can] get back to engaging customers," says Al Sotelo, director of solutions sales at one west coast TABS dealer. Although TABS still trains nearly 700 people each month using face-to-face instruction, incorporating eLearning tools has allowed the company to cut costly three- and four-day sessions in half.

TABS continues to look for ways to benefit from eLearning solutions. TABS marketers now use Adobe Connect to carry out product launches, and HR has eliminated the need for multiday meetings by delivering compliance training in 18-minute, online sessions.

"Adobe Connect opened up our training program to become an around-the-clock, one-stop education shop," says Bamberger. Because Adobe Connect uses common applications such as Adobe's Flash Player, joining a virtual session is easy and generally glitch-free.

Bamberger notes that incorporating Adobe Connect tools into

existing training methodologies was a smooth transition. "We didn't receive a single call regarding technical issues or difficulty accessing the system. It's simply a matter of notifying participants and plugging in a URL."

E-Learning in Action: Constellation Wines Reduces the Cost of Training

Another global enterprise, Constellation Wines, the world's largest wine producer by revenue, uses a blend of conventional and eLearning methods to train salespeople and strengthen relationships among both sales-channel partners and customers across different markets. The company previously used costly, time-consuming, in-person training to keep reps, partners, and customers informed about its latest products. New reps were flown to California's Napa Valley for a week of on-site training that featured PowerPoint presentations. There was no cost-effective way to familiarize teams with local wineries, winemakers, and the wine country, and there was no way at all to train partners to communicate more effectively with customers.

Constellation began using eLearning tools to get product information to its reps faster and extend training to partners and customers around the world. "An online solution helps create a more engaging learning experience in a way that static, written materials cannot," explains Rob Hennigar, Constellation's director of education. "Since the wine industry continually evolves, easily updating and maintaining training materials is essential." Using Adobe Connect also eliminated travel costs and cut training-development expenses.

Adding Adobe Connect has allowed the company to keep its in-house training team small while minimizing reliance on IT support, which has helped keep the cost of training low. The solution also cut travel expenses and accelerated the speed of training.

A More Engaging and Interactive Approach to Sales Training

The Adobe Connect for eLearning solution is a powerful tool that rivals and often exceeds the level of engagement achieved in any face-to-face sales training session. Training sessions can occur in real time as part of a public forum; all participants can ask questions, and immediate responses are broadcast to the group. Icons, emoticons, movies, animation, high-resolution graphics, and streaming video and audio can all be used to keep the interactive environment fun and lively. Documents can be linked to presentations, and an expert's live or recorded videos can be attached. Pop quizzes and prepared tests enable trainers to test knowledge and retention. Webcams and prerecorded flash-video files are especially helpful for performing essential role-plays and spontaneous sales demonstrations. Virtual breakout sessions within the main lesson enable participants to shift focus smoothly, and small groups can work independently in separate sessions.

E-Learning tools such as Adobe Connect make it fast, easy, and economical for enterprise sales management to invest in advancing the skill sets of their salespeople and channel partners so they are up-to-date on new products and maintain a competitive selling edge. Combined with conventional, in-person sales-training

Hennigar says Adobe Connect's easy-to-use interface is ideal for wine experts who work infrequently with advanced technological tools. Rather than learn a complicated new system, the company can now develop in-house courses by using such familiar tools as PowerPoint. Constellation now uses a combination of recorded and live presentations online to train approximately 850 employees, and it uses Adobe Connect regularly for its teams' sales meetings and brand-manager presentations.

"An online solution helps create a more engaging learning experience in a way that static, written materials cannot."

Rob Hennigar, Director of Education
Constellation Wines

sessions, eLearning solutions allow companies to provide reps and partners with quality training on a more consistent basis. Adobe Connect adds particular value by offering an engaging, dynamic, interactive learning environment, which helps facilitate highly effective sales training. Enterprises that choose to deploy the Adobe Connect solution are empowered by the confidence of knowing that training goals will be met at dramatically lower cost and with greater measurable results. •