

Building a Maximum Impact Sales Kickoff

A Planning Guide for Sales & Marketing Pros



The State of Sales Kickoffs

In a world of virtual meetings, the Sales Kickoff stands strong as an important forum for distributed teams. For many companies, it's the one time a year everyone sets aside valuable time to make face-to-face connections with their team mates, learn about products and sales methodologies, get the scoop on competitors, and get motivated for the year to come. But here's the thing: that's a lot of things!

Attention spans are at an all-time low and retention of information can be abysmal. You've probably heard of 'The Forgetting Curve'. While the percentages and days of time quoted vary, suffice it to say most people forget most information they learn (up to 89%), really quickly (between 2-10 days). And that's the information that actually stuck!

So in an age when proving the value of every expenditure is paramount, what can be done to justify taking your sales team out of the field for 3, 2, even 1 full day?



PART

1

THEME

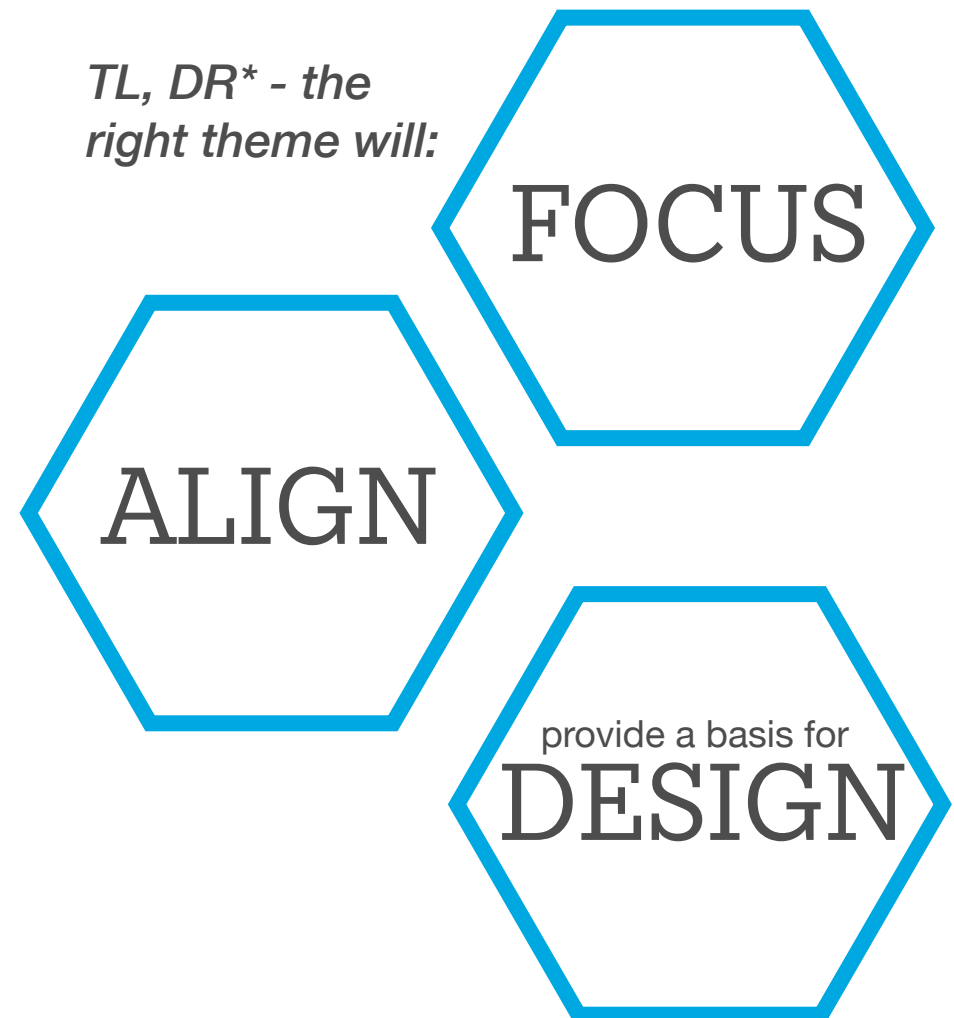
Theme - Why?

Pick a Theme, NOT Any Theme

It's a sure bet that some of us reading this have tacked on a theme as an afterthought, maybe added a themed logo or signs, bought some tchotchkes that relate to the theme, and called it a day. No judgement - there are more important things to think about than gimmicks right? Trick question alert!

A strong theme can be a powerful way to focus your sales kickoff and serve as a tool for information retention by providing context for attendees and a way to align content. Then by tying your theme through your event design (**alongside corporate branding!**) you visually reinforce the message you're presenting. A good event producer can help you bring your theme through stage-design, lighting, music, presentations, signage, badges, awards, gifts, and more (or less) for an experience your sales team will remember.

TL, DR - the
right theme will:*



*TL, DR is internet speak for 'Too Long, Didn't Read'. We'll use it throughout the eBook to summarize key points contained in the blocks of text.

Theme - Choosing



The One Right Theme for Your Team

With so many things to cover at a once-a-year gather (training, team-building, goal-setting, recognition, motivation) it may seem like a challenge to pick one theme above all and have it mean something. The secret is getting to both the root and the overarching goal simultaneously.

What's going on in your organization? How is sales team morale? Are there a lot of wins? Go for a celebration, keep up the momentum theme. A new player in the industry nipping at your heels? Competitive is the way to go. A tough year last year? Motivation is the answer. Alternatively, what's the top goal this year? What aligns with top-line company goals? Closing more deals? Better customer satisfaction?

Pick a theme that will unify your team AND that presenters can use as focus for their presentations.

PART

2

SESSION FORMATS



Format Factors

Now that you have your theme, you're ready to start building your event narrative. Content will be a key piece of that. And as much as - if not more than - the actual content, the way you deliver that content can affect what your sales team takes away from the session.

Given what we've discussed about **attention span** (it's short), **learning and forgetting** (we don't remember much), and what we know about people (we have **5 senses**), the **session format + event ambiance** (temperature, lighting, visual experience, and audio) can make a HUGE difference in information retention.

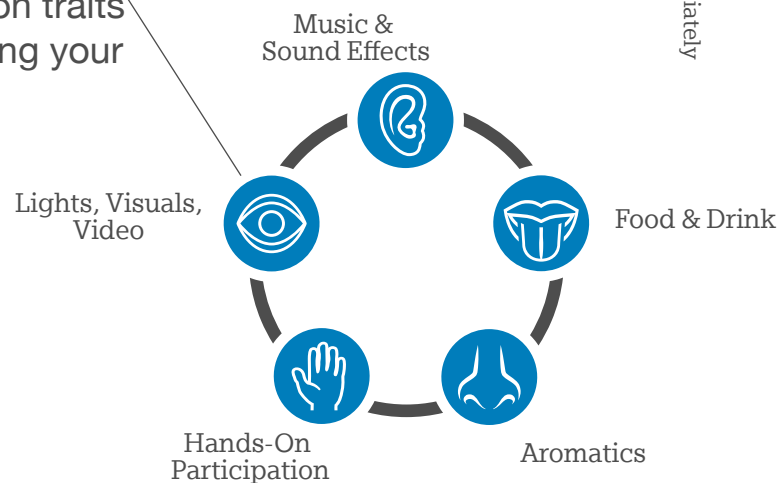
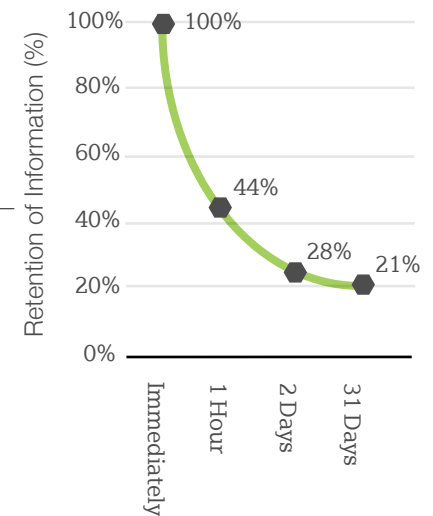
On the following pages, we'll explore some common traits your sales folks which if kept in mind while designing your sessions will lead to engagement and retention.



Mix It Up

Attention starts to wander after 10 minutes. Learn more from [Dr. Medina's Brain Rules](#).

The Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve



Session Formats

sales traits
to keep in mind
as you design

#1

They Have Opinions

Your sales team is the front line and connected to each other in a way your executive SKO planning committee is probably not. Bring reps in at the planning stage to find out what they want to get out of the event. Surveys, polls, and one-on-one conversations can tell you what will make the event worth the valuable time being spent, and exactly what they want/need to learn about. Your team is much more likely to pay attention to things they asked to hear about (and this is about them, right?).

TL, DR:

Involve your sales team when planning your content.

#2

They Like to Hear Directly from Peers

Sales folks like to hear from their peers, not just the executive team. Real-life success stories are always captivating, especially when told from both sides – the client and your top salesperson. If you don't want your customers on-site, gather details from a few clients ahead of time around why they bought and what's working for them and present that information. Then have a panel of those top salespeople who sold the accounts interviewed live on stage, with a Q&A at the end.

TL, DR:

Top sales people should directly share success stories.



Session Formats

sales traits
to keep in mind
as you design

#3

They Want to be Part of the Action

The more interactive and fun you can make a session, the more engaged your sales team will be. Imagine your SKO as a game show, with a host, players answering questions about what they learned in the last session and competing against each other for prizes (salespeople are competitive and incentive-driven, after all). There's a reason gamification has become all the rage.

TL, DR:

Make sessions more memorable by adding an interactive component - polls, games, etc.

#4

They're All About Connection

Salespeople make their living on creating relationships. The stronger their intra-company relationships, the easier their job. Create opportunities for interaction between reps and reps, executives and reps, marketing and reps, and product teams and reps. Breakouts, panels, roundtables and more can act as formal connection points. And make sure there's a fair amount of time to relax and have fun together as well (drinks and games anyone?).

TL, DR:

Make time for reps to build relationships with each other and with other departments.



Session Formats

sales traits
to keep in mind
as you design

#5 They're Competitive - and Thrive on Recognition

SKO is a time to rally the troops! The tone should be upbeat, and it's important to recognize those who have succeeded since the last time you all got together. Not only is this ideal for those in the spotlight, but it's also a powerful motivator for all your reps to keep their eye on the prize, so they are the ones up there next year.

TL, DR:

Celebrate success; it's a motivator (in more than one way).

#6 They Need Breaks

You want the team's full attention, and you have to squeeze too much content into too little time. What's the solution? It may sound radical, but decide what must be communicated in-person at SKO and what can be presented virtually in the weeks following. It's 100% worth the time and interdepartmental struggle it may cause. Because if you jam-pack as much as you can into each day, you can bet your team is spending time distracted, worrying about how they'll fit the five must-do customer calls into the 15 total minutes of break time allotted.

TL, DR:

They need breaks!



PART

3

EVENT DESIGN &
PRODUCTION



Event Design & Production

Last but most certainly not least we come to our favorite topic, Event Production. For sales kickoffs, production is a balance of 'We appreciate you! Let's get psyched!' and 'Let's not go overboard for an internal meeting!'. Good news - it's possible to do both. Here are the things to pay attention to that give that big event feel for an internal meeting budget:

Cost Saving Basics: Negotiation for things like venue fees, F&B, WiFi, Audio Visual (A/V), and more will make room to spend on some of the fun stuff. Did you know ***you can save 60% or more*** just by making sure you're not locked in to using the hotel A/V and production services? Here are [10 Things to Negotiate with Event Venues](#).



Event Design & Production

Stage Design: There are so many creative stage sets these days that there's just no excuse for drab drapes and a podium. LED video panels are easy to do and have tremendous impact; your production partner can help with the creative. If you need help selling your ideas, your production team can actually bring your stage vision to life digitally ahead of time. A picture's worth a thousand words!

Lighting: Lighting has a huge impact on event ambiance. When you change lighting throughout your event, attendees may not notice on a conscious level but it keeps things fresh and enhances the experience. Lighting Designers have many different lighting options, from color to position to shape and form. You can even have big company logos (or any other logo or phrase) in lights for a real enthusiasm booster!



Event Design & Production

Music: Music brings you back and makes you remember the NOW. Customize walk on music for each speaker. It can give your audience a good laugh and bring Executive Team members down to Earth. Who knew that the CEO likes Beastie Boys as much as you do??? You have an opportunity to not only bring out personalities with music, but you can really bust a move with your theme. Think about opening with a live act to energize the crowd. Drums, electric violins, a jamming piano! How about a sax player playing current tunes?

Break Outs: Don't make break out rooms feel like high-school detention rooms. It can be as simple as adding water stations with spunky fruited water, nice signage, good lighting and visual displays. And Break Out room slides deserve rehearsals (and sometimes a graphics editor) just as much as the main stage.



PART

4

FINAL THOUGHTS &
MORE RESOURCES



Final Thoughts & More Resources

Rehearsals: Just because this is an internal event, doesn't mean you don't need rehearsals! Both logistically and for speakers, a walk through gives a chance to review the detailed timing of speakers, content, lighting and music requirements will be reviewed. Your production partner will take you through the event from beginning to end, sans equipment. You will almost certainly find questions that need to be answered and that last week gives you time to solve any outstanding issues. There are plenty of other checklist items to be done for production too - here's a [Big Event Production Checklist](#) to get the ball rolling.

Opening video: Open with an awesome customized memorable video that tells the story of the company NOW and where you are going! Visuals and sound are unforgettable. Here's a [checklist for Marketing Video Pre-production](#) to get you started.

Leave on a positive note! During the last hour of the multi day SKO serve snacks, beers and wine at the table. Quiz people through the afternoon on presentations and throw out prizes. Make it a party atmosphere to get them ready for the last social gathering that evening. And while you're at it, take notes on how information stuck.

Event Tech: Thought we forgot event tech? NO WAY! This is critical to every event these days. For sales kickoffs, we recommend employing live-polling and survey tools as well as taking a look at something like [MindTickle's Ongoing Enablement](#) product which will help you reinforce the information you imparted at SKO.

SKO is just the beginning: No matter what tool you use to do it, you need to look at SKO as a beginning. If you don't consistently reinforce your messages throughout the year and follow up on training with webinars, at All Hands Meetings, etc., you'll have wasted all the hard work you put into your meeting. While you're developing your SKO plan, start thinking about your follow-through plan.



About AVT Productions

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From concept to design to execution, we provide complete event planning, management, and production for the Silicon Valley. Clients including Cisco, Intel, Facebook, Groupware, and many others rely on us for:

- ◆ Corporate Conferences
- ◆ All Hands Meetings
- ◆ Traveling Global Roadshows
- ◆ Event Webcasting
- ◆ Corporate Parties
- ◆ On-Site Event Techs

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DO THE RIGHT THING

ATTENTION to *detail*

GET THINGS
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