ABSTRACT
Sales management is one of the important functions of any organization because of its revenue generation capacity. The profit objective achievement and future survival of organization depends upon the efficient sales force management. Organizations mostly avoid investing money in sales force training and motivating sales people which may lead to revenue deterioration. An appropriate model needs to develop to justify retention and performance improvement against training imparted. This paper attempts to provide guideline on designing Effective Sales Training to Motivate, Retain and Excel the Performance of Sales Employees.

Keywords: Sales Training, Motivation, Retention, Performance

INTRODUCTION
Sales people are most of the times targeted for their performance and organizations complaints that sales people are not efficient and effective in their role. Organizations are mostly blaming for not increasing sales and tapping right customer by their sales team. There are always high sales expectations every years but organizations are not willing to invest (Slopec 2009) in sales training or have meager provision in their budget as expense on training. Managing the entire interface with the customer is probably the most critical function for an ultimate success of an organization.

TRAINING CLOUD TO RAIN EFFECTIVE TRAINING (PROPOSED SALES TRAINING ELEMENTS)
Training is like a rain of knowledge (Theory plus Practical -Tacit) to cultivate sales force. It is very important to have enough rain in all areas for crop cultivation to harvest maximum profitability. Same in sales training to have all elements (all required ingredients of sales training program) to be incorporated to develop efficient and effective sales force. Having enough rain (training) with following elements covered would be helpful to harvest maximum profit.

Sales training’s effectiveness/ impact can be strengthen and durable when objectives and expectations are well defined. Trainees are evaluated on present skills and capabilities to identify gaps and
expectations. An interaction and survey of trainees, executives, managers, channel partners and consultants can provide useful inside on design and execution of training programme. It is expected to have long lasting sales performers after undergoing sales training (Honeycutt et al. 2001).

Corporate puts continuous efforts to evaluate and modify existing training programme. It’s like video game when one puts efforts to understand how to play and improves further by playing again and again. Every attempt in playing video games figure outs mistake made and help to improve further by avoiding same mistakes in next attempt. The performance of sales person at the end and over the period of time can be measured based on the peak in sales figure, can do what they need to do at a high level of proficiency, will do what they need to do, know what to do every day and get it all done consistently and efficiently.

The impact and effectiveness of training can be enhanced if followed some specific strategies as below

**Matching business expectations with learning objectives** – Sales training is not just an event but it’s an investment of time, energy, and financial resources intended to produce a specific business outcome. To produce intended outcome an analytical thinking is important instead of wishful thought. It’s very common to have say that a company wants to increase a sales per sales man from one level to next higher level which is some time unjustifiable. Aligning business expectations and learning needs is an essential thing to avoid dissatisfaction that business didn’t achieve results or over invested in areas which don’t need the effort. Corporate needs to think the business outcome that we believe we can achieve and what does our sales team need to do to achieve that outcome. A gap analysis from existing to expected level of performance and what kind of initiative will it take to get our team from lower to upper level and keep them there.

**Focus on product and sales knowledge** – Sales people must be well versed with the product knowledge and the business process of the customer. Fluency is about an accuracy plus speed with appropriate breadth and depth in communicating product value. Having in-depth knowledge about product and business processes will have synergetic to convince the customer.

**Assessment of personal attributes & capabilities** – an assessment of sales peoples would help to map personal attributes and capabilities to decide about direction, coaching, action plans, confidence building exercise and positive reinforcement. Selecting right team of sales people by identifying right attributes and capabilities will improve the performance and retention of sales people.

**Describe, support, and drive action** – Sales person as an individual and as member of team should know what is expected to do in an organization. Knowing when to do certain things (process) and how to do them well (methodology) is very important to impart during training program. Training must have a goal setting exercise followed by action plans. Sales people must be aware of the support process and system to channelizing their efforts on right direction for the fulfillment of goals.

**Develop interest and connect with participants** – an improved behavior as expected from the training will not be the outcome if participants were not actively engaged. The active voluntarily involved of participants is possible through well planed training module. It’s always challenge to encourage engagement of participants during sales training because of monotones delivery. A proper balance of theory and practice needs to be embedded in training module with great openness of thought from all levels. Now days many simulation software are also available to develop field strategies at desktop.

**Continuous learning and recall expectations** – Training for few hours or days will fades over a period of time. What is learnt during training, it’s application and relevance may get dilutied if not repeated. Learning is continuous process through repetition and practice, would help sales force to internalize the training and put it to use consistently in future. A yearly refresher training programe and some of the certifications in sales and marketing may add continues knowledge. An experience sharing meetings or symposium at regular interval is also advisable.

**Set responsibilities and accountability** – As we know sales is considered as process and has its input and output. The sales performance against the sales actions can be measured and responsibilities can
be assigned. If organizations don’t hold people accountable for execution intensity, consistency, and quality, then it’s like leaving results to chance. The efficiency – getting more things done and effectiveness – getting things done with greater success is very important.

Creating Training Cloud to Rain Effective Training – In order to get a right result from sales training above guidelines should be followed.

**Figure 1 – Training Cloud to Rain Effective Training**

- Matching business expectations with learning objectives.
- Focus on product and sales knowledge
- Assessment of personal attributes & capabilities
- Assessment of personal attributes & capabilities
- Describe, support, and drive action
- Develop interest and connect with participants
- Continuous learning and recall expectations
- Set responsibilities and accountability

**SALES MOTIVATION STRATEGIES**

Motivation is a drive to start an action. It’s inner force which sets a person to act in certain way or direction (Maslow 1970, Herzberg 1959). It drives human performance improvement and has lot to relate with sales force management.

This is especially true in the field of sales force management that salespeople work with more job autonomy to deal with field situations and also frequently faces customer rejection at the end of deal. To maintain the zeal of work they need to be motivated. As a part of profession salespeople have to be get motivated externally (organizational efforts) or internally (self motivated).

Almost all type of industry sectors have employees working in sales-related jobs and their job performance matters considerably to their organizations. Also companies spend heavily on sales training to improve their salespeople’s productivity and performance

Training and performance improvement professionals inside and outside the organization have to study several sales motivation theories and framework developed in the past. Understating the problems and using the well acquainted language for communicating can be useful to influence contemporary sales management practices. Sales people have different work challenges and very dynamic environment compare to other employees in the organization. They have to work independently and need to take a call may be sometime without depending on superior. Working in very dynamic market needs to be self motivated to perform well and those who are not self motivated may avoid putting extra efforts. There are many challenges like field work, mistreatment, lack of support and rejections may cause frustrations and therefore it generally takes a lot of motivation for salespeople to pull themselves together and move on to the next sales call.

Organizations should explore the possibility of developing inbuilt motivation during training program but mostly it is ignored by many organizations. Frequent interaction with salespeople may enables to design a proper module or program to have motivation as integral part of training. Training manger in
collaboration with sales manager can significantly enhance the effectiveness of training manager’s influence because salespeople are more willing to comply with their managers. It is therefore in the best interests of the organizations when their sales managers and training professionals work together to motivate the sales force.

There are some of the effective strategies to motivate and sustain the performance of sales force as enlisted below

**Motivation through Sales goal setting** – Having goal before to start has always promoted in performance management theories. A performance without goal is difficult to measure and when a scale is used to measure performance, it may lead to excelled performance because of self motivation to prove better than others. Research has consistently shown the positive effects of goal setting on motivation and job performance (Locke & Latham 1990). Having specific and challenging goals lead to better performance instead of no goals or vague goals or allowing doing things with own pace. To motivate salespeople sales managers in most companies frequently use sales quotas i.e. an organization assigned goal. Setting sales goal should not be abrupt and goal must be optimal to assure the best performance out of motivation. If it’s beyond optimal limit, it may de-motivation and selling effort decreases as goal levels increase.

Hence the optimal level of sales goal must be set in accordance with self set goal of sales people with consideration of their own strength and weakness or own capabilities. Training must include a capability evaluation, goal setting, rewards and incentives both monetary and nonmonetary as achievable (Fu et al.2009, Locke 1991).

A self evaluation to set own goals may assure commitment to sales quotas and sales training has been proven to be an effective strategy to gain such commitment. An appropriate sales training on product knowledge, selling skills and factual information can reduce the ambiguity and enhance salespeople’s self-efficacy. Enhanced self efficacy will lead to improved motivation and, eventually, better sales performance.

**Application of Vroom's expectancy theory** - Vroom proposed that an employee's performance is depend on an individual characteristics such as personality, skills, knowledge, experience and abilities (Vroom, 1964).

Vroom's (1964) instrumentality theory represents general theory of work motivation. He defines motivation as the "force" impelling a person to perform a particular action, as determined by the interaction of the person's expectancy that his act will be followed by a particular outcome, and the valence of that (first-level) outcome.

Motivation is fundamentally depends on an individual choice, same for salespeople cannot be motivated unless they wanted to be. Hence sales managers and scholars have long been exploring the drivers of sales motivation. In this a Vroom’s theory provides a very useful insight that sales people tune their efforts, performance and output.

Sales people will try to find out the possibility that first of all, how increase in efforts or extra efforts will lead to superior performance, labeled as *expectancy* in the language of sales management. The second is how likely is it that the enhanced performance will lead to increased attainment of some type of reward (monetary or nonmonetary) or incentives, known as instrumentality. The third how attractive and appealing the reward is to the salespeople, known as *valence for reward*. If the possibilities are large enough and the reward or incentives are attractive, then salespeople will choose to be motivated and may put hard effort on the particular task. If any of the possibility is not satisfactory, then salespeople will not be motivated and there will be no hard effort (Fu 2015).

The influence of motivation may vary from personality to personality depends upon various other factors like qualification, age, culture, awareness, situations, experiences, knowledge, backgrounds etc. The motivation has to be tuned through sales training by introducing certain product benefits that salespeople were unaware of before a new product launch. You can also improve salespeople’s
product knowledge, selling skills, and self-confidence. This will enhance their expectancy, which will lead to better motivation. Instrumentality can be increased with guiding possible ways for reward achievement. Further the value of reward i.e. Valance may be different for every individual sales person. Hence reward conformity need to be analyze during training program and accordingly a motivational offerings to be highlighted during training.

**Echelon in sales organization** – Sales people are at various echelon in sales organization (Johnston & Marshall, 2013) and each of this level has different motivations. Like if we broadly categories three levels like - entry level, middle level and senior level it will implicate different motivations. At initial level they gain more experience, accumulate more knowledge, and sharpen their selling skills. Over period of time, their family statuses and financial obligations are likely to change. Thus, younger and less experienced salespeople may have different expectancy estimates and reward preferences from those of older and more experienced salespeople. Sales managers and training professionals need to pay particular attention to the unique needs of individual salesperson’s level in the hierarchy in order to find the best motivation strategies.

**Figure 2 – Sales Motivation Strategies**

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<th>Motivation through Sales goal setting</th>
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<tr>
<td>Application of Vroom's expectancy theory</td>
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<td>Echelon in sales organization</td>
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**RETENTION AND PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE**

A consistent motivation with proper mix of above strategies will hold sales people to be a loyal performer. In very dynamic competitive business environment it’s challenging to retain a performer because of better opportunity offered by competing firms. Finding, training, motivating and retaining star sales people will always demands high investment from companies. Thus, businesses spend whopping amount in compensations (salaries and incentives) and sales training of performing sales force and expect to sustain or improved performance in future.

A traditional method to measure the performance of sales people based on past data (E.g. – number of deals cracked, revenue generated, conversion rate, customer loyalty, customer complaints etc.) needs to modify with the help of technological advancement. If the past data is not properly recorded and managed it may provide limited insight into how a salesperson will do going forward and what types of training and incentives will be most effective. As a result, many firms may overvalue their poor performers and undervalue their stars, misdirecting their sales force investments. Hence a technological advancement in data management needs to adopt. Data on age, qualification, aptitude, assigned territory, customer portfolio handled, orders generated from each customer, frequency of order etc. can be recorded to find out the future value of salesperson (Kumar 2015). This will helpful to find out the future performance and specific type of sales training needed ultimately resulting into sales fore retention (Hackel 2016) and performance excellence of sales professionals.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Sales function as revenue source has its prime importance in all sorts of organizations. It needs to be managing very professionally and skillfully for harvesting maximum profit. Training is such mechanism through which expected output in terms of performance can be improved. Training needs to include - Matching business expectations with learning objectives, Focus on product and sales knowledge, Assessment of personal attributes & capabilities, Assessment of personal attributes & capabilities, Describe, support, and drive action, Develop interest and connect with participants, Continuous learning and recall expectations and Set responsibilities and accountability.
Having excellent training mechanism must be coupled with right motivation to sales people. The appropriate mix of strategies to motivate would be - Motivation through Sales goal setting, Application of Vroom's expectancy theory and evaluating Echelon in sales organization.

**Figure 3 – Effective Training + Sales Motivation Strategies = Retention and Performance**

Thus, combined effect of excellent training mechanism and appropriate mix of strategies to motivate sales people will defiantly results into sales force retention and performance excellence for maximum profitability of an organization.

**LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

This paper provides conceptual framework on Designing Effective Sales Training to Motivate, Retain and Excel the Performance of Sales Employees. The proposed theories have scope to test it with field data collection and further improvement.

**REFERENCES**