



# Planning For A Successful Store Meeting

**You know the drill.** It's late Friday afternoon after what seems to be an endlessly long week. You've interviewed dozens of candidates for a couple of openings on your sales team and no one has really hit the mark. You've struggled to cover the floor because one associate is out on a scheduled vacation and another one has been out sick all week. Two others have been at each other battling over the commission on what seems to be a split sale.

You're about to put on your coat and walk out the door when you suddenly remember that you've got to lead a sales meeting in the morning. With no time to think about the agenda, you decide to wing it. You'll figure out something on your way in.

You make a dash to Krispy Kreme at 7 the next morning wondering why you didn't call and order ahead. Or why they don't just know that you pick up the same three dozen donuts every Saturday morning. You get to the store and start the first pot of coffee taking out your yellow pad to jot down some notes for the meeting.

You talk about this week's promotions, clarify an incentive program, tell the team to watch for a shipment of product they've been waiting for and urge them to try to get along. The associates yawn and nod. The store opens and it's off to the races

Fast forward to Tuesday when and you start analyzing the weekend sales. Hmmmm. Sales in some areas were ok, but very few tickets included all the possible add-on items. The low gross margin reflects that the attachment rate for accessories seems to have dropped. The new product line on the floor doesn't seem to be moving well. You seem to be selling too many low margin entry-level products.



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You take a call from an installation crew who wasn't given proper instructions and is missing some things they need to complete the job.

You're interrupted to talk to a customer who can't get his questions answered by his sales associate. And so it goes.

Sales training is the single most important responsibility of a sales or store manager. The only way your associates will know how to take care of your customers the way you want them treated is if you teach them how. They'll only know how to conduct a professional, customer-focused presentation if you show them how it's done. Associates will only understand how to turn features into important customer benefits if you illustrate how to do it. They'll only sell complete packages with all the possible options if they know how to keep selling until the customer stops them. And they'll only close sales if they know how to ask the customer to buy.

The key to successful sales training is in planning for it. You've got to make the planning a priority and set aside designated time for it. Clear your head of all other distractions and concentrate on the results you want your meetings to produce.

- Create a list of major meeting themes that you rotate through. You might concentrate on a review of basic selling skills one week, customer service the next, product knowledge, technology updates, accessory attachment, extended warranty sales, and installation updates at subsequent meetings.
- Develop a meeting template: You could schedule five minutes to discuss upcoming promotions, five minutes on scheduling and other administrative details, and then five minutes to let team members air their concerns. You can then spend thirty to forty minutes on the main theme for that meeting. End by celebrating the week's successes—first sale, largest sale, most volume, highest gross margin, employment anniversary or birthdays.
- If you can't find one meeting time when everyone will be scheduled to be in the store, rotate the meetings so that it's not always on the same person's day off.



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- Change the menu—look for healthy alternatives to donuts or pizza like fruit, low-fat muffins, yogurt and even smoothies.
- Write out clear expectations for all vendors who will participate in your meetings. Review it with them during the week before their scheduled training events.
- Keep a running list of new opportunities and challenges that arise between meetings so that you can include them on the meeting agenda.
- Take notes so that you can follow-up on items brought up by your staff.
- Schedule time a day or two before each meeting to create the agenda.
- Determine specific outcomes that you want for the meeting.
- If other team members will be leading part of the training session, meet with them to rehearse their presentations.
- Distribute the agenda to participants. Include a list of specific things they will learn in the meeting. Include the time that each agenda item will begin.
- To meet your team members' expectations, stick to the schedule and to the agenda.
- Solicit feedback from your team about ways in which to improve meetings.

You have limited time to meet with your team as a group. Make sure that they really benefit from those sessions. You'll only get out what you put in.