

**STI International**<sup>®</sup>  
customized sales and service training

# QUESTIONS an Out-Sourced TRAINER Must Answer to Your Satisfaction

By **Conrad Elnes**

Member: "Who's Who Of Sales Thought Leaders"

**Author:**

*Inside Secrets Of Outstanding Salespeople* (Prentice-Hall)

**I**f sales training is such a good idea, why isn't everyone training their salespeople regularly? Twenty years of working closely with **corporate CEOs, Vice Presidents and Directors of Sales, Sales Managers and Corporate Training Directors** have illuminated some strongly felt concerns that can discourage companies from investing money to obtain out-sourced training.

**T**he following is a list of the most frequent concerns. To help ensure that you make a safe and rewarding training investment when you outsource, I'll provide a synopsis of each concern listed and a recommendation.

## FREQUENT CONCERNS

1. “How can we be assured of a Guaranteed ROI from our investment in sales training?”
2. “How much are your training fees?”
3. “Upon what basis was the program developed?”
4. “How will you customize the program for my staff?”
5. “How will the program be delivered?”
6. “What kinds of training should I provide?”
7. “How do I bring my new hires up to speed with the initial group you train?”

A successful program will provide a big pay off for your sales people, for your career and for your company. Due diligence is your assurance of making a great trainer selection. Since success is so essential, you will be well-rewarded when you invest time to ask these questions of a potential provider and insist on a satisfactory answer to each.

### **TO LEARN MORE:**

If you would like additional details about any of my answers to the concerns cited in this paper, please see my contact information at the **CONCLUSION**. Naturally there is no cost or obligation and our privacy policy applies.

### **1. “How can we be assured of a Guaranteed ROI from our investment in sales training?”**

With nearly all companies making strong efforts to reduce costs, funding requests are increasingly being subjected to hard-nosed Value

Justification. CFOs require more than verbal assurances, anecdotal success stories and testimonials submitted by trainers. How can you best Value Justify your training request?

**Recommendation:** Many factors, outside their control, make it difficult for most trainers to offer a guaranteed ROI in advance of their programs. The risk is all yours. Among the basic requirements to receive a guarantee are these: a minimum of 12 or more salespeople (no maximum), a significant growth opportunity to increase sales, a willingness to provide an extended program rather than a “dose” of training and a proactive rather than reactive sales process. If your company meets these requirements, we will make an analysis of your situation and inform you whether or not you can qualify for a guaranteed ROI of up to 100% on your training investment within 12 months.

## 2. “How much are your training fees?”

It is risky to rely on the slogan “You get what you pay for.” Fees for intangible services such as training are extremely hard to evaluate. Considering the variety of fees, experience levels and delivery methods, how can you determine what represents appropriate value?

**Recommendation:** Experienced trainers’ fees may vary from a low of \$2,000 per day to as high as you can imagine for “celebrity” presenters. How many hours are required to reach your goals? Additional factors that may affect costs are delivery method, workbooks, training reinforcement, follow-on instructions for managers and travel expenses. It’s important to learn if the fee is contingent on the purchase of the trainer’s “back-of-the-room” products such as books and videos.

## 3. “Upon what basis was the program developed?”

Many programs are product knowledge driven, or developed to leverage the trainer’s or sales manager’s past experience. The results often disappoint because sales practices must change rapidly in response to the economy and customer demands. Another factor that causes

disappointments is transferability of successful skills from one person to another. What is a strong basis for effective training?

**Recommendation:** The amount of valid research that has been performed to identify the personal attributes used by world class salespeople to achieve such remarkable success is staggering. It's highly likely that a successful program will be based on study results more than the trainer's personal selling style and theories. The following success attributes have been validated, and training can help your salespeople begin to acquire them right now.

1. ***A partnering approach with customers.*** (Stress trust, knowledge of the customer and long term relationships based on mutual benefit.)
2. ***Driven by a compelling personal mission.*** (Motivation through achieving passionately felt goals.)
3. ***A listening/probing selling style.*** (Assures deep understanding of buyer needs.)
4. ***Versatility of selling behaviors.*** (Adapting sales behavior to buyer comfort zones.)
5. ***A higher level of thought applied in their sales process.*** (More focus on strategies and solutions than on features and benefits.)

#### **4. “How will you customize the program for my staff?”**

Nothing kills the spirit of participants faster than being subjected to generic training. Even before the presenter is introduced, participants will have developed strong opinions about the program. Also, a comprehensive training program establishes a **uniform selling process** to which everyone can be held accountable. What customization options should you expect?

**Recommendation:** Since a Value Justified program will help you establish a comprehensive selling model, several steps may be involved in customizing training for your staff. For example:

- Pre-training interviews with managers will help establish objectives and the degree of customization desired.

- Joint calls and interviews with key members of your sales team and a written report of diagnosed needs should be delivered to management.
- Post-training management support must be provided to help assure success.

## 5. “How will the program be delivered?”

Receiving a results payoff from attending seminars that include dozens or hundreds of attendees is a rare occurrence. Unless a few hours of entertainment for the “troops” is your desire, consider this: How can you provide an effective program?

**Recommendation:** Those who demand measurable behavior improvements and revenue increases from their training, deliver it to groups ranging in size from 6 – 18 participants. This size allows for maximum learning through interactivity such as discussions and role plays. Lecturing should be minimized, and class preparation via workbooks or e-learning is often required. Classes limited to 2 – 4 hours in duration are very effective when logistically and economically feasible. Several forms of video can be utilized to help deliver and reinforce the training.

## 6. “What kinds of training should I provide?”

Many people think of tactical (face-to-face) skills and product knowledge when they consider sales training. Although both are foundational, they are far from a complete answer. So, what else do your salespeople need to satisfy customer demands?

**Recommendation:** Tactical skills and product knowledge alone rarely achieve desired goals for those who sell complex, high-value products and services to large customers. Prospecting skills must be considered, but even more essential are Advanced Listening Skills, Major Account Selling Strategies and a strong competence in Social Intelligence - the most sophisticated psychological aspect of sales interactions. Trainers who offer both width and depth in their curriculum give you a definite advantage.

## 7. “How do I bring my new hires up to speed with the initial group you train?”

It is unwise to hold new hires accountable for implementing the sales process you invested money to develop unless they are able to participate in a similar program. One payoff from training is a uniform and successful process that you and your team support to increase sales. How do you assure that will happen?

**Recommendation:** Since your new, unified selling process will be an essential benefit, new hires will dilute your results unless they are brought up to speed quickly. A trainer must offer his/her clients periodic programs at convenient locations and dates to provide an economical way to train new hires and avoid dilution of your process.

## CONCLUSION

I'll be happy to provide elaboration or clarification of any part of this paper. Please take advantage of my contact information. Also, if you have a question that wasn't answered here, e-mail it to me, and I will respond as quickly as possible. Please include your contact information.

Conrad Elnes, Chairman, STI International®  
Member: “Who's Who Of Sales Thought Leaders”  
1-800-784-1552     [celnes@salesinstitute.com](mailto:celnes@salesinstitute.com)