

Sales Enablement in Action: Building a Structured Skills Development Program

The BMG division at Brother developed a talent pipeline to train recent college graduates as Sales Development Representatives (SDRs), equipping them with the skills needed to transition into full-time sales and marketing roles. This pipeline worked well to fill most roles within BMG, but key external-facing roles were consistently filled by external hires. Many sales roles in other divisions were also filled by external hires. This created a bottleneck where certain high-value positions were excluded from internal hiring, thus leading to limited career paths, stagnation, and potential attrition. Inspired by a broader corporate initiative to foster cross-division mobility, I saw an opportunity to standardize sales competencies—creating a scalable skills framework that would open new career paths, improve retention, and reduce hiring costs across Brother’s sales organization.

Task: Defining a Core Sales Skill Framework

To expand available career opportunities, I proposed identifying a standard set of sales skills that high-performing reps in BMG should possess. The goal was to:

- Establish a structured skills roadmap for SDR career progression
- Prioritize training around high-impact sales competencies
- Align leadership and frontline sales teams on key performance skills

After discussing the idea with my manager, we refined the concept and mapped out an execution plan.

Action Steps

Phase 1: Researching Core Sales Skills

To create a data-driven skills framework, I conducted extensive research on sales competencies.

- Reviewed company job descriptions and industry best practices
- Mapped skills to key sales process milestones
- Researched proven sales enablement methodologies
- Compiled a finalized list of 10 essential sales skills

Phase 2: Validating with Leadership

- Conducted stakeholder meetings with sales leaders to refine the skill set
- Gathered feedback to ensure alignment with real-world key performance indicators

Phase 3: Establishing a Baseline

- Created and distributed self-assessment surveys to sales reps
- Sent manager evaluations to compare perceived vs. actual skill levels
- Used insights to prioritize training focus areas

Results & Business Impact

- Launched a structured sales skills library with curated courses at Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced levels.
- Rolled out the program across all five Brother divisions, reaching approximately 150 sales reps.
- Developed a comprehensive communications strategy, including:
 - Quick Reference Guides.
 - Open office hours for training support.
 - Internal marketing to drive engagement.
- Early feedback from the Sales Council audit showed:
 - 80%+ of the participants found the training content relevant.
 - Anecdotal feedback indicates increased levels of confidence in some skills. The feedback was too vague to provide specific numbers or identify specific skills.
 - Several courses were refined or replaced based on qualitative feedback.

This initiative laid the foundation for a scalable, company-wide sales skills training program. By equipping reps with structured learning, Brother now has a sustainable internal talent pipeline, reducing reliance on external hiring and fostering long-term career growth.