Sales Training Impact Report

The Value-Driven Seller:

# Essential Skills for Consultative Sales

THE BROOKS GROUP

SPRC Sales Performance Research Center

# The Power of Consultative Selling

With today's buyers in control—able to search for information about your company with just a few taps—your sales professionals need to be adept at selling not just your offering, but also the concept of themselves as strategic advisors.

Strategic advisors use a customer-focused approach to gain trust and credibility, build strong relationships and customer loyalty, and develop long-term, profitable accounts. They sell solutions, not transactions.

Becoming a strategic advisor starts with consultative selling skills. Companies that train their sales teams to use a consistent, value-based sales process see remarkable performance improvements, including higher win rates, stronger customer relationships, and increased revenue.

To help leaders equip their sellers effectively, we identified the core competencies to focus sales development efforts on. We measured the abilities of 208 sales professionals before and after our IMPACT Selling® training program.

**This report reveals the skill gaps and areas sellers are weakest before training, their improvement after training, and specific skills to target.** More importantly, the report also shows some skills have greater influence than others for driving sales performance.

Learn which consultative sales skills are essential and how targeted training can help your sales professionals become strategic advisors and achieve long-term revenue gains.

# Report Methodology

The Brooks Group Sales Performance Research Center compared pre- and post-training scores on the IMPACT Selling Skills Index® assessment taken by 208 sales professionals from B2B organizations in multiple industries.

Sellers took the IMPACT Selling Skills Index as a pre-training assessment, followed by training in either The Brooks Group IMPACT Selling® program and/or Strategic Account Management program. Sellers then retook the skills assessment 9-12 months after training.

The Index reports primary effectiveness, which represents how often the most effective selling strategy was chosen, as a percentage.

Group average score is the average of sellers' scores before and after training.

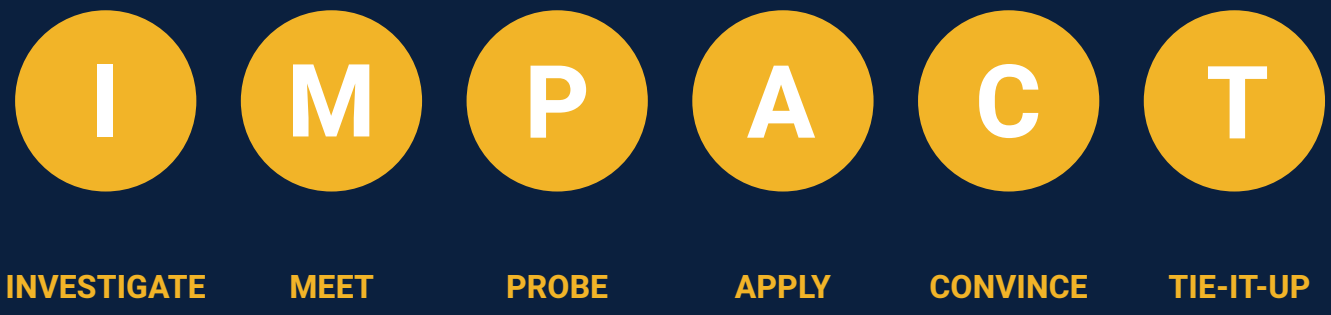
Average seller improvement is the average of individual sellers' improvement percentages.

Sellers also receive a sales acumen score, which reflects overall sales effectiveness based on weighted scores in each of the six steps of the sales process.

# About the IMPACT Selling Skills Index®

The IMPACT Selling Skills Index is a hard skills assessment that measures a sales professional's knowledge within the context of the IMPACT Selling sales process.

The IMPACT process has six steps: Investigate, Meet, Probe, Apply, Convince, Tie-It-Up. Sellers' scores represent their effectiveness at each step of the process.




The IMPACT Selling Skills Index measures these foundational sales skills:

- Researching and qualifying prospects
- Building customer relationships
- Planning sales calls
- Questioning
- Presenting
- Objection handling
- Selling value
- Closing

# Selling Skills Index Questions

Sellers answer 48 questions about common sales scenarios. Each question has four possible strategies for responding to the situation. Sellers rank each strategy from most to least effective. The test reveals whether sellers know the most effective approach for a given situation.

## Sample Question

"You have completed your presentation and were told you'd know something in two weeks. In two weeks, you discover the prospective buyer had bought from a competitor. Where did you make a mistake?"

Rank each option from 1 (most likely) to 4 (least likely).

**Option 1:**

You did not create enough value for your product or service compared to your competitor.

**Option 2:**

You gave too much information and confused the buyer, forcing them to look elsewhere.

**Option 3:**

You failed to develop sufficient trust.

**Option 4:**

You didn't go beyond their stated needs and failed to gain commitment.

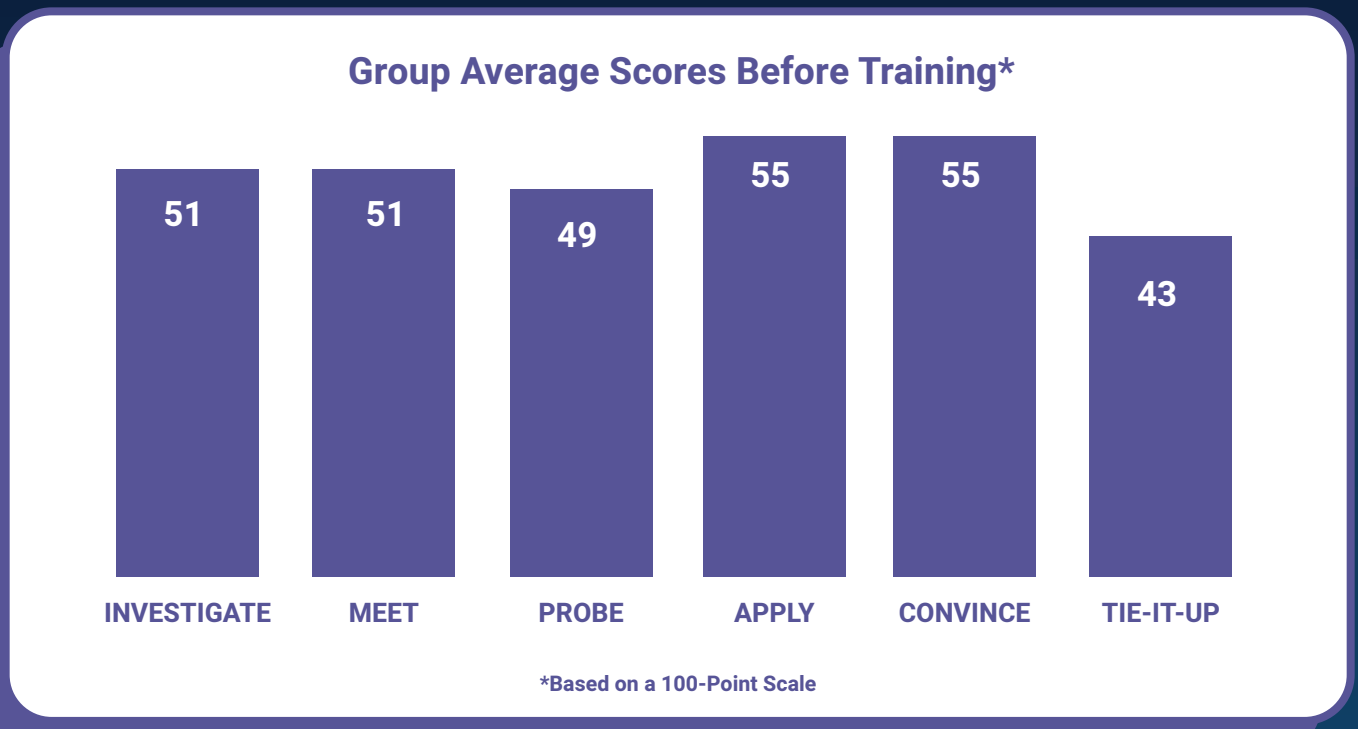
# 7 Findings: Essential Skills for Consultative Sales

## Finding 1. Sellers Push Product Instead of Selling Value

Before training, sellers score highest on the **Apply** step (recommending a solution) and **Convince** step (proving claims and handling objections).

This means sellers' skills are strongest when presenting their product or service and validating sales claims by conducting demos, providing samples, testimonials, etc.

Because sellers' baseline is strongest in product, service, and solution-focused areas, they tend to have a transactional approach with customers. Sellers gravitate toward feature-dumping and demos. They may not fully qualify opportunities, position themselves well with their customers, or ask questions to understand what and why their customers will buy.



## Finding 2. Sellers Score Lowest on Closing and Discovery Skills

Before training, sellers score lowest on the **Tie-It-Up** step (negotiating and finalizing the sale), followed by the **Probe** step (discovering buyer needs).

This means sellers are more focused on presenting a solution and conducting demos of their product or service than on understanding what the customer wants and needs. The focus on product or service instead of on understanding the customer may lead to difficulty in closing.

Without training, sellers are weaker in the closing steps of the process, indicating difficulty asking for the business or encountering late-stage stalls or objections because of ineffective questioning earlier in the process.

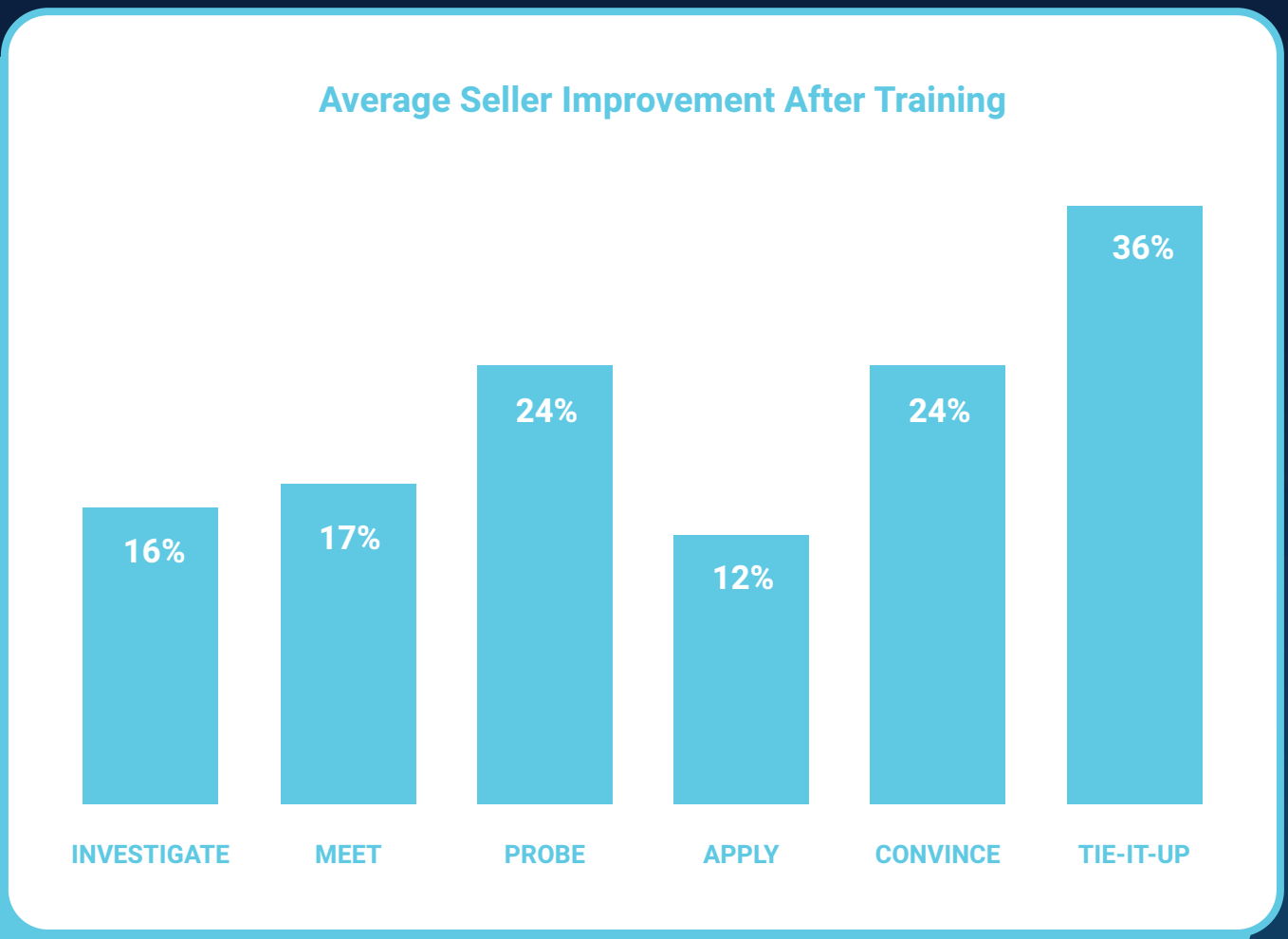
## Finding 3. Sellers Struggle with Positioning, Prospecting, and Pre-Call Planning

Before training, sellers struggle in early stages of the sales process. After **Probe** and **Tie-It-Up**, the next lowest scores are on the **Investigate** step (positioning, prospecting, and pre-call planning) and **Meet** step (engaging the buyer).

This means sellers aren't laying the groundwork for a successful sale by engaging new buyers effectively, differentiating themselves properly, or building rapport. This has consequences for later stages of the sales process.

# Finding 4: Sales Training Improves Scores Over 20%

After training, sellers show improved scores in every skill at each step of the sales process and greater proficiency across the board. Results show that, on average, training improved sellers' primary effectiveness scores by 21.5%. Sellers after training were more able to identify the best approach for each step in the sales process.



# Finding 5. Sellers Improve Both Discovery and Closing Skills with Training

After training, sellers show gains in the front half of the sales process, indicating stronger skills in understanding the customer, which are foundational to a consultative sales approach.

These higher scores represent greater competency in identifying qualified prospects, sales call planning, engaging prospects, and identifying what and why they will buy.

These skills enable sellers to present a value-based solution in the **Apply** step and differentiate from competitive offerings. This demonstrates growth in skills needed to shift from a transactional sales approach to a consultative one.

In addition, sellers show a 24% average improvement in the **Probe** step and 36% in the **Tie-It-Up** step. These skills are connected. The more a seller understands the customer, the better they can demonstrate value, mitigate objections, negotiate, and close sales.

Sellers showed the strongest growth in closing skills, indicating improvement in asking for the sale and gaining agreement to move forward.

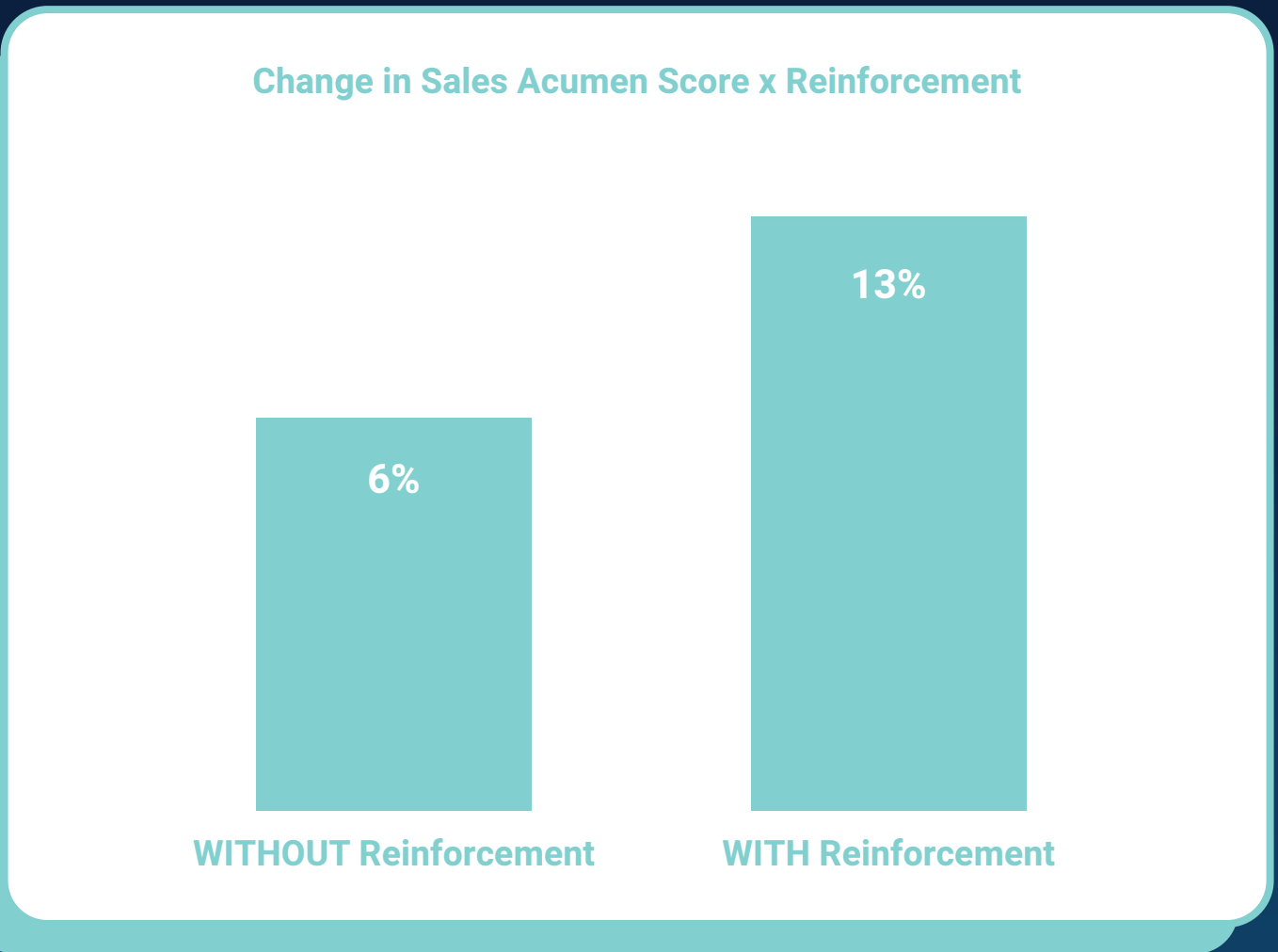
**These results show that when sellers improve in the early stage of the process, they're able to establish themselves as a strategic advisor, present their solution in a way that builds value, and close business more effectively.**



# Finding 6. Reinforcement Helps Sellers Improve Their Sales Acumen Score

Reinforcing seller skills after training greatly improves scores. Sellers who received sales skills training WITHOUT reinforcement showed a 6% average increase in their sales acumen score (n = 85), while sellers who received sales skills training WITH any type of reinforcement showed a 13% average increase in their sales acumen score (n = 122).

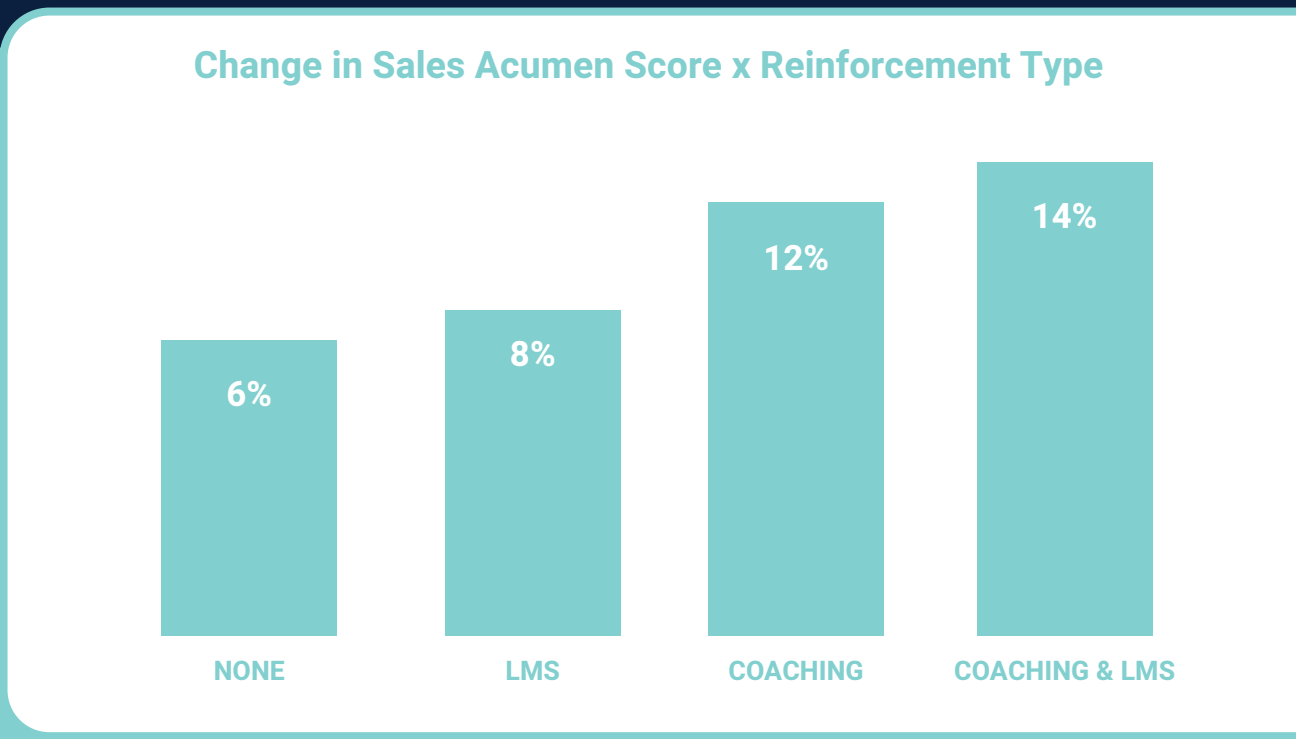
The sales acumen score reflects overall sales effectiveness based on weighted scores in each of the six steps of the sales process.



# Finding 7. Coaching Plus Reinforcement Makes the Biggest Difference

Sellers received one of three types of reinforcement: Learning Management System (LMS), coaching, and LMS plus coaching. Sellers used the BrooksUP™ eLearning platform and received coaching led by The Brooks Group.

- Sellers who used LMS reinforcement as their only strategy show an 8% average increase in their Sales Acumen score.
- Sellers who used small group coaching as their only strategy show a 12% average increase in their Sales Acumen score.
- Sellers who used a combination of coaching plus LMS reinforcement show a 14% average increase in their Sales Acumen score.



# 5 Recommendations to Improve Sales Performance

1

## Use a Consultative Sales Approach

Consultative selling is a needs-based selling approach that focuses on building a relationship with a customer or prospect, understanding their problems, and developing solutions to their challenges.

Instead of focusing on transactions, make sure your sales professionals can build long-term relationships beyond the initial sale and maintain their standing as trusted business partners. Train them on the primary skills of a consultative sales approach: asking open-ended questions and practicing active listening.

2

## Unlock Sales Team Potential with Skills Training

Consultative selling skills are crucial for long-term success and revenue growth. Training your sellers on these core skills will not only help them meet prospects and customers where they are in the buying process; it will also help them build credibility, improve the predictability of your sales funnel, and engage in meaningful dialogue that progresses the sale.

3

## Diagnose Skills Gaps to Target Improvement

Regardless of which sales approach you use, a sales assessment can help you diagnose whether your sales professionals have the skills they need to get results. Assessments such as the IMPACT Selling Skills Index are objective measures of the fundamental selling skills needed to perform in a challenging environment.

# 5 Recommendations to Improve Sales Performance

4

## Focus Training on Early-Stage Selling Skills

Before training, sellers naturally tend to skip ahead in the sales process to presenting solutions and conducting demos of their product or service, rather than trying to understand what the customer wants and needs. This focus on product or service instead of on the customer leads to difficulty in closing.

Based on our research, sellers are typically weak at positioning, prospecting, pre-call planning, and questioning. Without these essential skills, they'll have difficulty asking for the business or overcoming late-stage stalls and objections.

5

## Consider IMPACT Selling® Training from The Brooks Group

Sales skills training takes the guesswork out of sales and lets your team control the sales process from start to finish. Whether you have a team of seasoned pros or new talent in need of guidance, IMPACT Selling provides the foundation for consultative selling and gives your team the ability to engage customers where they are today. It's a proven methodology that ensures long-term improvement and consistent performance across your entire sales organization.

# What Is IMPACT Selling®?

IMPACT Selling teaches a practical six-stage sales methodology. “IMPACT” is an acronym representing the core stages of the sales process: **Investigate**, **Meet**, **Probe**, **Apply**, **Convince**, **Tie-It-Up**.

This sequence guides sales professionals through strategic milestones while providing tactical techniques to navigate each buyer interaction with confidence.

At its core, IMPACT uses a consultative sales strategy to empower sales professionals. The program teaches probing questioning skills to understand customers’ needs and challenges up-front.

Sellers then apply this knowledge to present the best solution and overcome objections. The process culminates in negotiating a mutually beneficial close while laying the groundwork for future sales.

| I | M | P | A | C | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **INVESTIGATE** | **MEET** | **PROBE** | **APPLY** | **CONVINCE** | **TIE-IT-UP** |
| Positioning | Build trust as a strategic advisor | Ask questions to determine needs and wants | Build value formula | Justify price | Ask for the business |
| Prospecting | Create positive impression | | Connect recommendation to needs and wants | Prove claims | Determine next steps |
| Pre-call planning | | | | | |

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT IMPACT SELLING**

# About The Brooks Group

Unlocking sales potential for over 45 years, The Brooks Group is the leading sales training and development company empowering sales teams to generate breakthrough results. Notable clients include Airbus, Avita Medical, Bobcat, Hitachi Energy, Mack Trucks and Volvo Trucks, SANY Americas, and the United States Air Force.

To learn more about our suite of ROI-driven sales training and development programs, industry-leading reinforcement tools, and best-in-class assessments, visit **www.brooksgroup.com**.

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