



SUPER-CHARGING SALES EFFECTIVENESS:

From Talent Excellence
to Precise Execution

 15 MIN

EBOOK



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

-Sam Tepper, PhD, Senior Partner, Sales Effectiveness Practice Leader at Korn Ferry

I've recently met several sales leaders facing a tough road ahead. They tell me their sales pipelines are in disarray, with deals dragging on longer than they should. Teams are bogged down by administrative tasks, leaving much less time for closing deals. Productivity is slipping, forecasts are becoming less reliable, and onboarding new sellers is a burden amid higher-than-usual churn. Yet their goals remain the same: to help their team build sales capability and accelerate revenue growth.

Supercharging Sales Effectiveness: From Talent Excellence to Precise Execution presents a timely and essential guide for organizations seeking to breakthrough to immediate, predictable and sustainable sales effectiveness.

What's the urgency? Our research has revealed a dramatic decrease in revenue attainment over the past five years, while win rates have also dropped. Compounding these issues, buyers now view sellers as mere facilitators of transactions, with less than a quarter of corporate buyers engaging sellers early in the

process. Our findings also indicate that sellers are ninth on the list of people that buyers call when they want to solve their business issues.

That's a problem. Organizations need a new, transformative approach to adapt to the complexities of modern buying behavior. Sellers need to elevate themselves to the position of "trusted partner"; the first person a buyer will call.

At Korn Ferry, our [Sales Effectiveness](#) capabilities deliver the **only** comprehensive solution for changing seller behavior. We challenge traditional assumptions and approaches of sales training. We believe elite performance is only achieved by combining the best talent and sales methodology, amplified with advanced technology. Effective coaching and CRM-integrated tools ensure that seller behaviors are transformed—and those behaviors stick.

Feel free to share any thoughts or feedback around this content with the [Korn Ferry Sales Effectiveness team](#). We look forward to connecting with you and your business.



INTRODUCTION

You're not imagining it: selling is genuinely getting more difficult. According to Korn Ferry's *2024 Sales Maturity Survey*, revenue attainment has dropped by 6% over the past five years, and win rates are down by 5% in just three years.

On top of that, buyer paralysis is real—people are afraid of making the wrong decision, leading to stalled sales. Almost 80% of sales professionals say cycles are dragging on longer, with 6-8 stakeholders now involved in decision-making. And it's no surprise that 69% of sales leaders feel their teams just don't have the talent needed to succeed in the future.

Sales leaders are stuck navigating skill gaps, high employee turnover, and the struggle to align teams with a consistent sales language. Changing the sales culture or behaviors? That's often easier said than done. Everyone wants their teams to close bigger deals, faster, and to keep that sales pipeline flowing. The ultimate goal is to build a sustainable competitive edge in an environment that's always changing.

This guide is designed to tackle these challenges head-on. We'll show you how to develop top-notch talent in clearly defined roles, pinpoint the skills that lead to success, and create a common sales language and methodology. You'll learn to embed effective practices in your CRM, leverage AI, replicate the successes of your star sellers, and deliver accurate sales forecasts that meet your goals.

What's the potential payoff? Our research shows that organizations using Success Profiles – a clear understanding of what it takes to succeed in each sales role – see impressive gains: an 8% boost in revenue attainment, a whopping 25% in quota attainment, and a 17% increase in win rates. Plus, these organizations experience 17% lower voluntary turnover and 20% lower involuntary turnover.

And if your sales team effectively adopts a dynamic sales methodology (over 75% adoption), they can expect even more: a 21% increase in quota attainment, a 15% rise in win rates, and a 6% boost in revenue.

We have identified two levers that reliably drive higher sales performance:

1 Talent excellence: Identifying the profile of skills and competencies that deliver high performance in your sales organization, assessing your team to understand their gaps to greatness, then closing these gaps with targeted development journeys.

2 Precise execution: Deploying a proven sales methodology and common language, then deploying reinforcement technology in your CRM that ensures adoption and closes more deals.

With step-by-step advice and real-world case studies, this guide will help your sales teams realign with what customers need today. **Let's get started.**

CHAPTER 1: TALENT EXCELLENCE

Attaining talent excellence means arming you with sustainable talent transformation capabilities, leveraging [Korn Ferry's Talent Suite](#), to accomplish your business outcomes. How do we raise productivity, grow revenue, and improve customer satisfaction? How do we raise productivity, grow revenue, and improve customer satisfaction?

3 KEY STEPS:

- 1 Identify** the profile of skills and competencies that deliver high performance in your sales organization – now and in the future.
- 2 Assess** the individuals to understand the gaps to greatness.
- 3 Develop** your team to fill these gaps, ensuring they gain the necessary skills and attributes to meet your sales goals.



1. IDENTIFY:

KNOW WHAT SALES EXCELLENCE LOOKS LIKE

As a sales leader, one of your biggest challenges is identifying and defining what “excellent” looks like in your organization.

What are the KPIs or metrics you’re trying to move? Is it quota attainment? ACV? ARR? Revenue per customer? Deal size? Growth? How can you know what talent you need to deliver on those metrics? What is it about your top performers that puts them in a different class to their peers? How can you isolate this secret sauce and use it to uplift the rest of the team to reach a higher performance benchmark?

Without knowing the precise sales skills necessary for success, it’s difficult to nurture the right talent and ensure your team can consistently outperform the competition.

The Solution: Korn Ferry’s Success Profiles

Enter Korn Ferry’s Success Profiles—a powerful tool designed to address these challenges head-on. Success Profiles are research-based benchmarks that outline the competencies, skills, traits, and drivers needed for specific sales roles. They provide a clear framework for understanding what excellence looks like, enabling you to make informed decisions about hiring, training, and performance management.

Let’s Get Sales-Specific

Specific to sales teams and informed by billions of data points, Korn Ferry has developed 26 individual sales Success Profiles organized into eight job families. These profiles offer a research-based description of what “excellent” looks like in key client-facing roles.





Tailored Success Profiles

To further enhance your sales performance, Korn Ferry offers the opportunity to create **tailored Success Profiles**. By customizing these profiles, you ensure alignment with your organization's strategic goals and the metrics / KPIs you're trying to affect, making it easier to identify what excellence looks like in your unique context. The benefits of this approach include:

Aligning roles with strategic goals: Each role is connected to your organization's broader objectives and specific metrics for success, enhancing overall performance.

Identifying key competencies and behaviors: Pinpoint the essential skills and traits required for excellence, allowing for targeted training and development, based on each organization's performance data as well as our proprietary benchmarking data.

Providing a sales-specific foundation for assessments and development: Success Profiles ground your assessments in what truly matters, leading to more accurate evaluations and effective development and coaching plans.

THE IMPACT OF SUCCESS PROFILES

Organizations that leverage Success Profiles see significant improvements in performance metrics: for just two of our clients, Success Profiles project an uplift of more than \$800 million!

+8% **REVENUE
ATTAINMENT**

+25% **QUOTA
ATTAINMENT**

+17% **WIN
RATES**

-17% **VOLUNTARY
TURNOVER**

-20% **INVOLUNTARY
TURNOVER**

(Korn Ferry Sales Maturity Survey 2024)

2. ASSESS:

UNDERSTAND THE GAPS TO GREATNESS

Are you confident in the talent within your sales team? Do you know exactly where your strengths lie and where you need to improve?

After pinpointing the specific skills that will drive sales effectiveness, the next step is to **assess** your current sales team against those Success Profiles. Imagine the powerful insights you could uncover by running assessment analytics across your sales team.

Consider these critical questions:

What is the strength of your talent?

What are your most pressing skills gaps?

Do you have the right talent to execute your strategy?

How prepared are your sales leaders to lead effectively?

Which teams need the most support for future success?

Which reps are more likely to be successful managers, rather than merely being great reps?

To address these questions, you need a structured approach to assess your sales talent. Here's how you can effectively understand the gaps to greatness:

1. Identify high-performing and high-potential talent:

Recognizing who excels and who has the potential to grow is essential for building a strong team.

2. Use predictive analytics:

Leverage data to understand which skills and individuals drive your growth and differentiate your highest performers from the rest of the field. This insight allows you to make informed decisions about talent development, including hire-versus-train. It also allows you to make far better succession management decisions.

3. Employ holistic assessment:

Evaluate individuals on their skills, competencies, and traits, ensuring a comprehensive view of their capabilities.

4. Incorporate insights into your talent management:

Insights from assessments can now inform better hiring, onboarding, development, coaching, succession, and retention.

Key components of your assessment strategy

Clear measurement: Establish direct measures of critical sales capabilities and benchmark assessment results against best-in-class standards. This clarity will help you gauge where your team stands.

Actionable recommendations: The data from your assessments should lead to clear, prioritized action steps. These recommendations will help you maximize your strategic impact and guide your training and coaching efforts.

Strategic talent alignment: Don't just assess talent strength; ensure that you have the right strategic talent in place for both current and next-level roles. Aggregate analytics for managers and sales leaders to see how well your team aligns with organizational goals and the metrics that matter for your success.

Focused interventions: Identify priority areas for skill development and coaching. Gain individual direction on what to focus on and in what order, ensuring that your efforts are aligned with your strategic objectives.

Research shows that individuals who strongly align with their Success Profiles are **7.5X more likely** to be highly engaged in their roles. This engagement translates into harder work, better collaboration, and improved customer care.

PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

Advanced analytics can also help predict future sales success and highlight the behavioral and cognitive traits of top performers. Organizations that use predictive hiring assessment tools report:

44% **LOWER INVOLUNTARY TURNOVER**

24% **LOWER VOLUNTARY TURNOVER**

23% **MORE SALESPEOPLE ACHIEVING THEIR FULL QUOTA**

MOREOVER, CANDIDATES WHO SCORE HIGHEST ON KORN FERRY ASSESSMENTS ARE **8X MORE LIKELY** TO BE TOP PERFORMERS WITHIN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS.

(Korn Ferry Sales Maturity Survey 2024)



CASE STUDY: **DISCOVERING THE SUPER FACTORS**

We helped one client uncover three “super factors” that explained **30% of their quota success** and opened the door to a whopping **\$532 million** in potential.

With this insight, we worked in partnership to supercharge their sales team’s journey through better recruiting, selection, and hiring, fast-track onboarding, smart coaching, and revised succession plans to promote the best leaders, not just the best reps. It also allowed them to better structure sales teams for better collaboration to get larger deals and more wins!



3. DEVELOP:

SUPERCHARGING PERFORMANCE THROUGH TRAINING AND COACHING

Do you have a development journey in place that can effectively close the gaps you have identified through assessments?

Investing in formal, effective onboarding and training accelerates ramp time to full productivity and reduces turnover. Best-in-class sales teams provide comprehensive development that prepares new hires to thrive in their roles. Our development journeys, powered by Miller Heiman, focus on three key areas:

- 1 Account Relationship Planning:** Miller Heiman's *Large Account Management Process (LAMP)* helps you create strategic plans and long-term roadmaps for your most important accounts. This process allows you to clearly organize accounts, solidify customer relationships, protect your accounts, and create mutual value.
- 2 Opportunity Management:** *Strategic Selling with Perspective* is a sales methodology that helps you win complex deals with a scalable, insights-driven approach. It enables your team to develop pursuit strategies, coach winning behaviors, and close more deals consistently.
- 3 Customer Interaction:** *Conceptual Selling with Perspective* prepares your team for meetings by focusing on customer-centric conversations. This approach helps sellers assess buyer needs carefully and avoid misalignment between what customers want and what you present.

**SALES ORGANIZATIONS
WHOSE SELLERS
DEMONSTRATE PERSPECTIVE
SELLING WERE**

3X

**AS LIKELY TO BE AT
THE DEEPEST LEVEL
OF RELATIONSHIP WITH
THEIR CLIENTS – THAT
OF TRUSTED PARTNER.**

Development journeys help your teams learn, practice, and master the most critical skills for effectively engaging with customers:

FOR SELLERS

Manage sales opportunities better

Create impactful client interactions

Protect and grow accounts

Win complex sales deals with a common sales language

Reach high-level decision makers

Win intricate negotiations

Identify defining moments to create loyal customers

FOR SALES MANAGERS

Reduced guesswork

Increased efficiency in the team

Strategies and a framework to leverage in coaching

Improved sales forecasting

Continuous learning and improvement

Enhanced leadership capabilities

Data driven approach to identifying areas for improvement

Training and development journeys can be accessed via self-paced e-learning, virtual instructor-led courses, on-site instructor-led courses, or public classrooms. We make it stick with multiple touchpoints over time, including learning, coaching, application, and reinforcement.

STEP IT UP WITH COACHING

If you are looking to increase ROI from your investment in sales tools, training, and processes, **coaching** provides tangible business impacts visible in your pipeline and win rates. Organizations with high levels of coaching maturity enjoy:

+14% **QUOTA
ATTAINMENT**

+15% **WIN
RATES**

-18% **VOLUNTARY
TURNOVER**

With your talent identification, assessment and development framework in place, it's time to take the leap from talent excellence to precise execution. This not only involves closing the gaps to transform talent through training and coaching, but also equipping your team with a cutting-edge sales methodology, and empowering them with best-in-class sales tech.

DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINED IMPACT

Korn Ferry supports and delivers change through a multimodal development journey. The journey involves both learning and application supported by SME's and Coaches.



Learning

Accessible through multiple modalities



Collaboration

To apply, test and learn through doing



Application

With guidance and support to develop capability



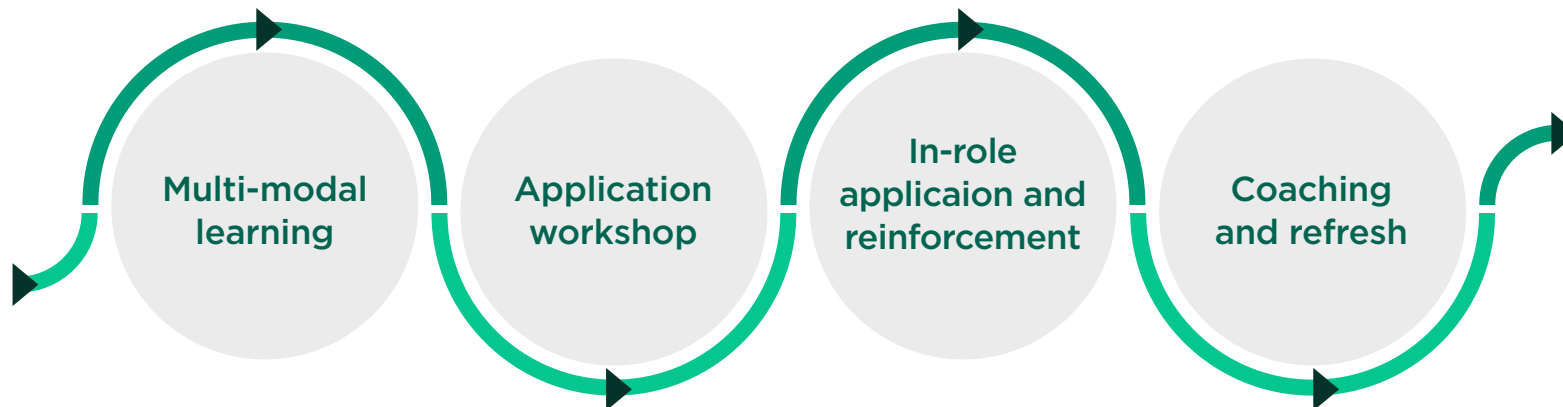
Coaching

Allowing input, steer and guidance to support the learner



Reflection

Taking time to look at impact



CHAPTER 2: **PRECISE EXECUTION**

Are your sellers struggling to articulate solutions clearly? Do they lack a structured approach to managing complex deals? Does your current sales technology help or hinder your team's efforts? Do sellers adopt your CRM, or do they “sandbag” because they see it as a reporting tool for management or an admin burden that doesn't help them sell? These obstacles can lead to missed opportunities and stalled sales processes.

WHAT DO BEST-IN-CLASS TEAMS DO?

They utilize a formal sales methodology which provides a **common language for sellers** to make it easier to articulate solutions and negotiate effectively. Supplemented with coaching and reinforcement, success becomes more easily repeatable.

They lean into the combination of **methodology and technology**, embedding it in their CRM, and setting up a scalable approach that boosts efficiency and productivity for lead/contact management, collaboration, and cross-selling opportunities.

In other words, they address whole sales organization transformation with **sales methodology**, then embed and amplify success with **sales technology**.

The powerful synergy of methodology and technology creates the foundation for what we call *precise execution*.





SALES METHODOLOGY:

UNLOCKING SUCCESS WITH A PROVEN FRAMEWORK

Best-in-class sales teams employ a formal sales methodology that provides a common language for sellers. This shared framework makes it easier to articulate solutions and negotiate effectively.

Our consistent methodology, powered by Miller Heiman, is designed to help organizations manage all levels of sales complexity and size, from multi-million-dollar deals involving several decision-makers to deals with small businesses across all industries. technology and infrastructure to help them close more sales, faster.

You need a sales-proven approach to develop elite sellers who consistently identify and solve problems. The goal is to establish repeatable, scalable, predictable operating methods that determine the organization's ability to achieve process maturity, go-to-market consistency, and improve win rates.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SALES PROCESS AND SALES METHODOLOGY?

While a **sales process** maps out a sequence of stages with specific entrance and exit criteria for each stage, a **sales methodology** introduces discipline through a system of principles and best practices that translate into seller actions.

Sales methodology explains the “how” and the “what” behind the process, whether it's preparing for a sales call, analyzing an opportunity, or upselling a large account. It connects the process to your customers' needs and provides a roadmap for how to navigate each stage. In practice, a sales methodology equips your sales team with a practical, repeatable, scalable framework for sales success.

Deploying a proven sales methodology not only clarifies what needs to be done but also equips your team with the skills to execute effectively. Knowing what needs to be done is very different from possessing the skills to do it.

The methodology provides teams with a blueprint for optimizing sales performance. It defines “what to do”—managing opportunities, planning client interactions, and protecting accounts—while the skills training focuses on “how to do it,” including building credibility, negotiating, and securing meetings.

SALES ORGANIZATIONS WHO REPORT >75% ADOPTION OF THEIR SALES METHODOLOGY ACHIEVE:

+21% **QUOTA
ATTAINMENT**

+15% **WIN
RATES**

+6% **REVENUE
ATTAINMENT**



CASE STUDY: **TRANSFORMING SALES FOR A GLOBAL INSURANCE LEADER**

After five years of flat sales, a global insurance giant found itself lagging behind competitors. The national accounts team was reluctant to change, clinging to outdated views of sales success and limited buyer contact.

We tackled this head-on by starting small and creating a buzz around transformational change. By fostering a top-down cultural shift and bridging selling gaps, we gradually shifted focus to a new dimension: winnability.

The results? Win rates skyrocketed by 52.1%. A whopping 84% of sellers felt the new methodology helped them close more deals, leading to an 849% return on investment.





TECH:

TURBOCHARGING YOUR SALES PROCESS

Sales teams need the ability to understand and predict the outcomes of their activities while accurately forecasting results to achieve success.

They require an approach that fosters consistent selling behaviors, supported by CRM-integrated technology that provides reliable data on win rates, deal sizes, and funnel velocity. Ultimately, they want the ability to make better decisions by integrating key metrics and insights to optimize performance and enhance their strategic planning efforts.

Best-in-class sales teams lean into the combination of methodology and technology, embedded in their CRM. This setup creates a scalable approach that boosts efficiency for lead and contact management, collaboration, and cross-selling opportunities.

Sales organizations who agree that they have sufficient adoption of the sales technologies they deploy achieve

+29% **WIN RATES**

+12% **QUOTA ATTAINMENT**

Predictive modeling: Korn Ferry Sell is a native CRM application that combines sales methodology and technology to increase sales effectiveness. It uses predictive modeling within the CRM to enhance the accuracy of sales forecasting, gain insights and action prompts, and enable more strategic decision-making and resource allocation. Incoming data quality is reflected in meaningful forecasting and reporting.

Having a rigorous forecasting process that drives forecast accuracy reaps dividends, linked to

+21% **QUOTA ATTAINMENT**

+18% **WIN RATES**

-25% **CUSTOMER CHURN**

(Korn Ferry Sales Maturity Survey 2024)

Embed methodology at the point of work and need:

The platform enables seamless integration of your sales methodology into opportunities for productive interactions and a confident, data-driven approach to closing deals. Gain visibility into the likelihood of a win and receive prompts that help keep opportunities moving forward. This integration allows for actionable strategic account plans and deepens customer relationships by making every interaction count.

It also makes the CRM more useful for your sellers so they see the tool as an integral part of running their books of business, instead of merely an additional admin burden or management reporting/oversight mechanism. This creates higher CRM adoption, a consistent challenge among sales organizations. Managers can now coach sellers at the exact points where sales obstacles may be occurring, creating better coaching conversations.

CRM adoption + methodology:

Sales organizations who report a >75% adoption rate of their CRM by sellers see modest

+4% **WIN RATES**

When a **dynamic methodology** is added to CRM adoption

+16% **WIN RATE**

a fourfold increase.

Learning Library: Korn Ferry Sell also offers real-time online training resources and coachable insights to enhance manager's impact on quota attainment and seller retention. Access refresher micro-learning content available directly from the CRM, targeted support for recommended actions, and full digital courses covering our renowned sales methodology.

Sales organizations who report that their sales teams have access to sales training and development resources that are available on-demand achieve

+18% **WIN RATES**



**KORN FERRY
SELL**

Uncover the full power of your Salesforce and Microsoft Dynamics data with **Korn Ferry Sell**®, powered by **Miller Heiman**. Customizable dash-boards offer full visibility into critical, real-time sales metrics—helping you improve the accuracy of sales forecasting, allocate resources more effectively, and make data-driven decisions that yield tangible results.

[Learn more](#)

CASE STUDY: **BOOSTING TO \$2 BILLION**

A financial advisory firm with 17,300 employees was stuck in a low-cost rut as competitors nipped at their heels. Their challenge? A scattered sales process that left them vulnerable in a crowded market.

We stepped in to formalize their sales approach, introducing advanced methodologies and skills training to boost effectiveness.

Together, we transformed their sales game and skyrocketed their assets under management to \$2 billion, establishing a repeatable framework for success, a universal sales language, and a clear ROI.





ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

We have also found that sales talent and execution both sit within an organizational system that either supports or impedes growth. Ensuring that the overall strategy, people, processes, and enabling technologies are aligned to your goals is tantamount to success.

Korn Ferry can help you diagnose and benchmark where you're leading class and where you are lagging. More importantly, we help you pinpoint what matters, and why. We can also help you prioritize the initiatives to address your organizational inhibitors to success. Here's how we help organizations lay the groundwork:

Aligned sales organizations:

Hand-on-heart, do you believe you currently have the right sales roles and organizational structure? Are roles and responsibilities in your go-to-market cadence clear? Do you have hunters and farmers? What happens to your customers / accounts when you sell new logos and then pass them off to Customer Success? Are your customers likely to churn or do you make it as easy as possible to do business with you?

We ensure that your sales structure aligns with your business goals, enabling your team to operate efficiently and effectively, with a constant eye on your customer experience.

Effective compensation:

Are your compensation plans working? The right compensation will incentivize the seller to

engage in the right behaviors to maximize their productivity. Learn how Korn Ferry can help you match your incentives to your business strategy, motivate your teams to beat their targets, and attract top talent here.

Creating a movement: People talk a lot about change management, but no one really likes to have change managed at them. But with the right mindset, ability, system, structures, and communication plans we can create a "movement", transforming your organization to where you'd like it to be. Korn Ferry can help keep what's special about your culture while at the same time help you direct it to where it needs to be to achieve sales success. Learn more about how Korn Ferry helps ignite transformational and cultural change.



ARE YOU READY TO TRANSFORM YOUR ORGANIZATION'S SALES EFFECTIVENESS?

Korn Ferry's Sales Effectiveness consulting solutions empower you to consistently replicate successful wins throughout your organization.

Through world-beating talent excellence and precise execution, our solution offers a proven model for identifying critical sales skills, assessing your team against what "excellent" looks like, then closing the gaps with a comprehensive sales methodology, innovative tech, and transformative training.

Ready to take the next step?

**TALK TO A SALES
EFFECTIVENESS EXPERT**

Korn Ferry is a global organizational consulting firm. We work with our clients to design optimal organization structures, roles, and responsibilities. We help them hire the right people and advise them on how to reward and motivate their workforce while developing professionals as they navigate and advance their careers.

**Business advisors.
Career makers.**