

We have hired a new sales rep who has sales experience but no print media experience. Our new hire has selling skill and doesn't need sales training, but does need industry-specific training because he has no knowledge of print. We are looking for ways to get our new employee up to speed. What do you do to successfully prepare a new sales rep to sell your wares?

Summary: more than half of the respondents do some kind of "on-the-production-floor training/orientation."

The book *Getting it Printed* is a great resource

Assigning a mentor who is successful will be helpful, working alongside a colleague in every department to obtain firsthand knowledge of how jobs are processed is a great experience, and attending a class e.g. G7 Certification Training will help with learning about color management.

I truly think shadowing other successful sales reps is the most effective way to get reps up to speed on products and solutions. That way the new salesperson has exposure to different strategies and styles as well as product lines. One key to shadowing that can make a night and day difference is having the "mentor" rep explain the preparation before a meeting or pitch, and provide a breakdown of "why" after the interaction. I also believe this is the best way for new sales people to learn how to offer *your* company's solutions and selling points, as opposed to regurgitating info from a fact sheet, catalog or service spreadsheet.

I'm not sure of the name, but the Certified Customer Service course used to be great. It was in Chicago at the time but now has gone online (not sure if the online will be as effective). It was heavy on teaching industry experience.

Have the sales person meet with every department manager for process familiarization along with top management. Send the person to GLGA sessions on graphics and printing. (*Editor's note: see the end of this compilation for links.*)

First thing we do is have the new sales rep spend at least one day in each department so he/she gets an idea of what we do and how we do it. He/she spends time in the art department, customer service, press, ink room, die cutting, to the shipping department.

We also set him up with a current sales rep. They work together for about 6 months, going on sales calls together, calling clients and potential clients. After 6 months the 2 sales reps meet once a week to review what the new one is working on, answer questions, give suggestions, etc.

After 1 year the sales reps meet once a month (or more often if necessary).

After the 2nd anniversary the senior sales rep acts more as a mentor and meets with the jr sales rep as needed.

We have the person spend time in all areas of manufacturing until they feel that they understand the process and then they move on to another area after this "hands on" training they will spend a few weeks traveling with an experienced salesperson until they feel comfortable enough to go out on their own. This process from our experience take three to six months.

We have them spend 1 month in each department. Customer service, Art Department, Pre-press, Print, Bindery, Mail production. This gives the new hire a chance to meet fellow employees as well as develop a respect for what the employees on the "inside" are responsible for on a day to day basis. You could also include Estimating and Accounting in the mix. 6 months minimum training.

Give the rep a good ole *Pocket Pal* from GATF and tell him to read it as well as *Print* from Neenah paper and he will be fine.

I recommend that you identify the following items to create some focus:

1. What drives your presses the most (Sweet Spot)? Can you productize sizes and specifications?
 2. What is the most successful customer(s) – how can you template that to sell other accounts (particular market sector or application)
 3. Have the rep conduct a SWOT analysis – it will be a great learning experience and give him/her some ideas for dialogue with customers on How to differentiate and create competitive advantage.
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For Sales Reps who have no industry experience, we generally have internal training for 1-2 weeks. Incorporates time on the floor, reviewing products and applications, as well as with internal support functions and how they are involved in the customer relationship. Then weekly follow ups with time on the floor reviewing products and applications, as they are different every week with the diversity of customers in our mix; also weekly meeting with Sales Mgr and other reps to review things along the way.

We've not hired a sales person without a printing background, but I'd suggest, as we do with our interns, is to have them spend time working in each department (production and office) to learn the process (procedures) flow (order entry to shipment) and production capabilities.

We have all of our new sales executives spend at least 2 weeks in production (longer for someone with no print experience). They work side by side with everyone such as pre-press, press operators, bindery and even our delivery people. We also have them work with another experienced sales person who has the print knowledge already.

I used to get them the latest edition of the *Pocket Pal* and have them go through the process backwards in the plant starting at shipping....

Editor's note:

Printing Industries of America offers resources:

1. PIA's iLearning Center online training portal has a class called "Orientation to the Graphic Arts." This is the online version of the class that PIA used to offer at their training center in Pittsburgh. <http://ilearn.printing.org/courses/> Description: This course is a complete orientation to the graphic arts, including an overview of printing processes; print production workflow; introduction to prepress hardware; introduction to prepress software; all about PDF; pixel images, file formats, and screening; color theory; preflighting, trapping, and imposition; the offset press; binding, finishing, and shipping; paper and ink; and cost estimating.

You can see a demo video here: <http://ilearn.printing.org/category/training-demos/>

2. PIA has a number of publications in their [bookstore](#). We suggest *PrintScape*. It was written by Dr. Dan Wilson of Illinois State University (and a member of the GLGA board of directors), and it is specifically for new hires who need a crash course in graphic communications.

This is the link to a self-study package:

https://system.printing.org/index.php?dispatch=products2.view&product_id=7250

Here is a link to the table of contents, sample pages and sample presentation:

<http://www.printing.org/page/4493>

To get the member discount when you purchase publications or iLearning Center classes, you will need a member log-in to the PIA website. if you don't have one, call PIA Member Central at (800) 910-4283 Ext. 770.
