

SAP Academy for Sales Leaders Helps First-Line Managers Innovate

SAP

Best Sales Leadership Development Program

February 2021



Company Background



Company-at-a-Glance	SAP
Headquarters	Walldorf, Germany
Year Founded	1972
Revenue	\$27.53 billion
Employees	100,000-plus in more than 140 countries
Global Scale	Worldwide operations in all regions (North America, South America, Asia Pacific and Japan, Australia and Europe)
Customers/Output, etc.	440,000 in 180-plus countries around the world. As the market leader in enterprise application software, 77% of the world's transaction revenue touches an SAP system. SAP's Machine Learning, Internet of Things (IoT) and advanced analytics technologies help turn customers' businesses into intelligent enterprises. SAP's end-to-end suite of applications and services enables its customers to operate profitably, adapt continuously and make a difference.
Industry	Software and IT
Stock Symbol	SAP SE (XETRA – Frankfurt Stock Exchange)
Website	www.sap.com

Budget and Timeframe

Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	Four
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	Four to eight
Number of contractors involved with implementation	Two
Timeframe to implement	2017-ongoing
Start date of the program	January 2017

Business Conditions and Business Needs

Over the past several years, SAP has faced some external and internal factors which SAP needed to address in the sales organization. These factors have led to the development of a program for first-line sales managers: the global SAP Academy for Sales Leaders. This flagship program drives the transformation of sales leaders to innovate, rethink, optimize and change.

External Factors

- Competitive situation.** There has been a dramatic shift from large and mid-sized ERP software companies toward smaller and faster-moving cloud-based solution companies. At the same time, traditional SAP customers are changing their perception that niche players can address their needs more flexible and at a lower cost. Both effects result in the challenge for salespeople and more importantly for sales leaders to understand this new market reality and to adapt their own mindset and behavior to these changes.
- The market has transformed into a “platform game.”** SAP has entered the market of big technical platform companies such as Google, Microsoft and Alibaba (so-called hyperscalers). However, SAP is not competing, it is leveraging these platforms. The technical infrastructure is in high need of explanation and the new way of articulating these details adds tremendously to the complexity of the SAP sales approach.
- SAP has responded to the market with acquisitions.** SAP has acquired 11 companies since 2016, expanding the solution portfolio extensively (e.g., Qualtrics for Experience Management, CallidusCloud for Sales Performance Management). The new workforce must be integrated into the SAP organization,

which poses additional challenges to the sales leaders who must deal with these new complexities on top of their current role.

Internal Factors

The new reality for SAP sales leaders brings new and unknown challenges. The most important and relevant to the SAP Academy for Sales Leaders are:

- **Organizational changes.** The sales teams of acquired companies need to be integrated. Typically, they have a “cloud mindset” and are unfamiliar with the long history and type of (global) customer engagements of SAP. At the same time, SAP leaders are lacking the cloud mindset.
- **Sales changes.** New go-to-market models are being established once a year with several special incentive programs every quarter. This makes it hard to stick to consistent messaging and execution with salespeople and customers
- **Leadership changes.** Leaders need to demonstrate a growth mindset and need to be open to digital innovation, exponential thinking and diversity inclusion. These newly required skills pose significant challenges to sales leaders within SAP. Coaching sales teams remains a big problem for many.
- **Integration of “digital natives.”** The SAP Academy for Sales Leaders needs to align and work closely with the “Sales Academy,” the global program for Early Talent in SAP sales. Digital natives will make up more than half of the sales force in 2025, which requires current sales leaders to integrate them in terms of working behavior, values and communication styles.

SAP's Sales Leadership Team knew that strong sales leadership — at the First-Line Sales Manager (FLSM) level — would be key to meeting these external/internal factors head-on. FLSMs would have to become Innovation Leaders, capable of driving success in their teams.

With that goal in mind, SAP created the SAP Academy for Sales Leaders — a program designed to revolutionize sales leadership and AE performance at SAP.

Overview

The first global SAP Academy for Sales Leaders program was created in 2014 as a 10-day on-site workshop designed to enable SAP's first-line sales managers to become better innovation leaders.

In 2016, SAP Sales Learning conducted a comprehensive field study in the sales organization, using their internal performance consultants. The outcomes of this study were used to build a new version of the Academy to better address the external and internal factors. The objective was to equip SAP's first-line sales managers with the skills

and tools they need to become better sales coaches, to successfully drive innovation in their teams by leveraging the enhanced SAP Solution portfolio, and to share and establish global best practices in sales leadership

In 2017, the new SAP Academy for Sales Learning was launched as a 4½-day workshop in different locations in the Silicon Valley. The program took advantage of the expertise of SAP from the SAP Innovation Center in Palo Alto, the d-shop for digital transformation in the SAP office as well as the SAP.iO network for startup organizations in San Francisco. Over the course of three years, the content was constantly adapted to address the fast-changing internal and external factors.

The SAP Sales Learning team has always viewed and delivered the SAP Academy for Sales Leaders program as an experience designed for SAP's sales leadership to change their management approaches and become an inspiring leader in a way that would yield measurable business results.

Therefore, SAP created a set of goals that would require a significant and tangible impact on the organization. The goals for the program are to improve upon the following five Key Performance Indicators:

- **Number of Opportunities** — Percentage increase of pipeline opportunities after completing the program
- **Average Pipeline Value** — Average increase in pipeline value after completing the program
- **Win Rate** — Percentage of opportunities won after completing the program
- **Revenue Value** — Percentage of additional sales revenue generated after completing the program
- **Average Deal Close Value** — Percentage of the average value per sales deal closed after completing the program

CRM Pipeline Data Analysis results taken from 2017-19 reveal that the SAP Academy for Sales Leaders program has a significant financial impact on SAP's sales organization. Improvements can be seen across the board in each of the Academy's five KPIs as well as in qualitative feedback gathered from program participants.

Design and Delivery of the Program

The design and content of the SAP Academy for Sales Leaders program were built upon a close analysis of both SAP's business and performance needs using performance consultancy and instructional design.

The analysis included research into the KPIs vital to the success of quota carriers and interviews with key business stakeholders, internal Subject Matter Experts and Sales Management — all to ensure the program's maximum impact. Results obtained in SAP's yearly Sales Leadership Assessment also revealed skill and competency gaps in sales leadership as a learning need to be addressed by the Academy.

Figure 1: Agenda of the 4½-day Academy Workshop

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	You and Your Teams	Leading your Sales Business	Executive Engagement & Coaching	Symphony Simulation	Your Change
8:30	Warm Up and Introduction	Leading your Sales Business: Pipeline Management	Understanding the C-Level Executive Language & Interpreting KPI's and adapting your language	Understanding & Dealing with Performance Gaps in Sales Teams	Wrap Up and Tying it all together.
10:00	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break
10:15	Strengths Deployment Inventory - How to best communicate and navigate conflicts	Leading your Sales Business: Pipeline Management	Understanding the C-Level Executive Language & Interpreting KPI's and adapting your language	Identifying performance gaps and finding the right tools to lead your teams through the performance gap	Your Action Plan: 1-2 things you have learned during this week that you'd like to do differently with your teams: 5 minute whitebarding presentations
12:00	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	End
1:00	How successful managers coach their teams & customers	Leading your Sales Business: Deals	How to apply new knowledge and become a more proficient coach for my team members.	Applying Performance Influencers to Case Studies	
2:30	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	
5:00	Coaching your Sales Teams	Leading your Sales Business: Individual Performance & Solutions	Challenge your individual team members on certain accounts where they are having an executive engagement	Applying Performance Influencers to real life scenarios	
	End	End	End	End	

Source: SAP

Program Delivery

The program is delivered and developed by senior SAP Sales Learning facilitators with multiple years of sales and sales leadership background. Third-party vendors were contracted to support on external topics, such as C-Level Executive Engagement and Financial Acumen, but the facilitation team guarantees that all sessions are aligned and delivered in a similar style.

Ensuring a high level of engagement of all participants, the delivery of the program is based on experience learning, requiring a constant interactive flow through each segment. Sub-group activities, breakouts and individual work are priorities, limiting traditional presentations to be done with no PowerPoint and only for short periods of

time (15-20 minutes segments). The Academy is the only week-long workshop delivered at SAP worldwide without any usage of PowerPoint slides.

Inclusion and diversity are not only discussed, but actively practiced. Participants are asked on each day to create the most diverse teams possible. The international audience allows the trainers to challenge leaders to consider multiple points of views on all subjects discussed in the program, such as gender, age, culture, beliefs, value systems, business acumen, etc. Participants also have time to reflect their learnings of the face-to-face experience, one of the rare moments in their career to be exposed to colleagues from many different countries. What seemed to be a typical challenge in one particular country often turns out to be a common problem to all sales leaders on a global scale.

Before arriving on-site, participants join a closed chat-group and are encouraged to network and share throughout the program, to grow their network and secure stronger personal ties. This helps them commit to the program easier and gives them an extended "inner circle" post-program.

Adoption of the Program

Since 2017, 32 workshops were held in different locations in Silicon Valley with a total of 750 Sales Leaders representing 51 nations.

The program started out with sponsorship and promotion by the SAP Board of Sales.

Over the years, the program had received a very good reputation among the sales leadership population so that individual sales leaders reached out to the program management office directly to request their prioritized participation. A very close alignment with the SAP Sales Learning organization in the global sales regions was also vital to ensure to offer relevant and impactful content to the audience of the Academy.

The regional SAP Sales Learning stakeholders were also key in the communication of the global Academy to their regional and local target audiences. They ensured the balanced regional mix of participants in the Academy, which is critical to foster international best-practice exchange.

In addition to executive-level sponsorship and promotion, a key to the program's adoption has been communicating its impact and success to the target audience.

One of the main surprises was the demand of the leadership of the acquisitions. Although their sales teams are usually hesitant toward training from SAP, the sales leaders asked the Academy to run special sessions for their first-line sales managers. Even outside the sales organization, the Academy trainer team had been requested to deliver parts of the program to interested teams in Finance, Development and Services. These additional

deliveries have been received very positively but are not part of the evaluation of this award application.

Externally, the program management team has presented to large groups as part of learning conferences and expert panels. In the last years, the Academy has won external learning awards such as ATD and Stevie Awards.

Measurable Benefits

The measurement of the program success was conducted in three different ways.

1. Comparison of the development of participants' teams versus teams of non-participants

This analysis was based on the key question from SAP Sales Executives: How are the teams of the Academy participants doing compared to the rest of the sales managers?

CRM Pipeline Data Analysis results taken from 2017-19 reveal that the SAP Academy for Sales Leaders has made a significant financial impact on the organization.

Figure 2: The Average Calculation Provided the Following Results on the 5 KPIs

KPI	Average result
Number of Opportunities	+57%
Pipeline Value	+ 97%
Win Rate	+38%
Revenue Value	+46%
Average Deal Close Value	+65%

Source: SAP

The difference in performance between the two groups is astounding. Those salespeople reporting to Academy for Sales Leader participants showed improvement across each of the five KPIs. There is a significant trend to higher pipeline build and larger deals for the participants' teams.

These results clearly demonstrate the value of the program to SAP Sales Executives. The absolute numbers and the yearly progress are categorized as SAP confidential and must not be shared. However, there is a positive trend year over year.

2. Net Promoter Score (NPS)

At the end of each workshop session, participants have been asked to provide their qualitative feedback using an anonymized online survey. For the NPS analysis, they had to rate the statement "I would recommend this training to others at SAP" with a score between 0-10. The NPS calculation indicates a steady improvement in this category:

Figure 3: Net Promoter Scores

Year	Average NPS
2017	69.2
2018	85.5
2019	90.1
Total	81.6

Source: SAP

NPS scores can reach values between -100 (100% detractors) to +100 (100% promoters). SAP Sales Learning considers any value above 50 as satisfactory and values above 60 as outstanding. The program has clearly reached an extraordinary result.

3. Participant Satisfaction Rating

As part of the final qualitative feedback survey participants also had to rate their satisfaction ("How satisfied are you with the program overall?") on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The average Satisfaction Score grew every year:

Figure 4: Participant Satisfaction Rating

Year	Average Satisfaction Score
2017	4.6
2018	4.8
2019	4.9
Total	4.77

Source: SAP

SAP Sales Learning considers any value of 4.6 and above as outstanding. Like the NPS analysis, the qualitative feedback had been extraordinary, and it helped the program team to optimize the program content and its delivery.

The primary focus of business impact measurement was on information gathered from the CRM Pipeline data analysis, which allowed the team to compare the performance of quota carriers reporting to sales managers who've completed the program versus quota carriers reporting to non-participant sales managers.

The intention was to focus on real business KPIs to measure the development of the participants and the full impact of the program compared to the rest of the sales leaders.

Overall

The experience of designing and executing a global program has taught the team many lessons about successful program implementation. The following key success factors are directly inspired from the overall learning experience with the SAP Academy for Sales Leaders. They are directly linked to address the external and internal factors.

- Executive endorsement
 - Endorsement and active support from SAP upper management is extremely important to demonstrate the importance, value and benefits of sales programs
 - Continuous alignment on the external/internal factors to be addressed is key
- Create sales relevant training:
 - Tailor training to the needs of the sales organization and the target audience
 - Training needs to be interactive, offer role-plays and encourage peer to peer practice and learning, gamification and a creative learning environment
 - All target audiences need to be addressed, in particular the leaders from acquisitions
- Constantly measure, evaluate and improve
 - Continuous monitor/measure improvement of the content and delivery
 - Continuously track participation to reach 100% participation of target audience
- Focus on the inclusion of a diverse and international target audience
 - Reflection on the growth mindset, exponential thinking and diversity aspects across boundaries needs to have a trusted and safe environment
 - Inclusion of Digital Natives wherever possible adds to the learning experience of leaders, such as leveraging the Early Talent program and SAP.iO with startup organizations
- Communication
 - Sharing results, successes and key findings across the organization (regions, market units, countries)

What is Next/Future Outlook?

SAP Sales Learning has planned to offer local adaptations of the SAP Academy for Sales Leader workshops. First pilots have been conducted in Japan and Greater China.

In addition, SAP Sales Learning will continue to revise modules and elements as new topics arise and new learning needs are identified.

The best example of this effort to address new learning needs is the current development, which started in February 2020 with the travel stop due to the COVID-19 situation. The SAP Sales Learning team immediately refocused and developed a full virtual Learning Journey for first-line sales managers. It contains the following three elements:

- **Leading Sales Teams in Critical Times** (six-week virtual cohorts and community learning) covering the following topics:
 - Your State of Mind in the Crisis
 - The new Sales Reality: customer focus and team focus
 - Empowering the Digital Sales Team
- **Virtual Sales Leadership Academy** (six-week virtual program)
 - Leading with Influence
 - Conflict Management and Communication
 - Sales Coaching
 - C-Level Executive Engagement Financial Acumen
 - Leading your Sales Business and Managing Up (Forecasting and Pipeline Management)
- **Post-workshop Activities** (virtual collaboration and peer-group learning to reinforce the newly acquired leadership behaviors)
 - Peer-to-Peer Learning
 - Field Application Challenges
 - Field Application Coaching

The future of the SAP Academy for Sales Leaders will be a combination of a large variety of training delivery methods to address the external and internal factors outlined in the beginning: On-demand knowledge transfer, virtual life classrooms and face-to-face workshops. SAP Sales Learning is already exploring new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (e.g., as a chatbot to find learning content faster) or Virtual Reality (to provide a better remote learning experience).

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