UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF PRODUCTION

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EVALUATION OF THE SALES MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAM

Identification of the success factors

Master's Thesis in
Industrial Management

VAASA 2019

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABB	Asea Brown Boveri
ASTD	American Society for Training & Development
BU	Business unit
ESM	Effective Sales Management
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LMS	Learning Management System
NPS	Net Promoter Score
RM	Robotics and Motion -division
SCM	Success Case Method
SFDC	Salesforce.com

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Degree: Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration
Major of Subject: Industrial Management
Year of Entering the University: 2013
Year of Completing the Thesis: 2019 **Pages:** 119

ABSTRACT

It has been proposed that the sales manager's job is one of the toughest and most important in management since the sales department is the only department that directly brings revenue to the company. In recent years, many companies have found that improving the working skills of sales managers through training can be a key to gaining a competitive advantage, as the responsibility of the sales managers is to manage the entire interface with the customer, which is the most critical overall success factor of the organization.

This Master's thesis was conducted to order for ABB. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the results of ABB's internal Effective Sales Management (ESM) program, as well as find areas for improvement. Moreover, this study aims to identify the critical factors for success and failure of the training, which helps to understand why some participants achieve better results than the others. This research was conducted by applying Brinkerhoff's (2003) Success Case Method. First, the data was collected from 30 sales managers who had completed the ESM program in the space of one year, by conducting an online survey. After that, the empirical material was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews, and 10 participants with extremely high or low results based on the questionnaires were interviewed.

The findings of the study suggest the trainer and the project work topic were the most crucial factors contributing to the success of the ESM program. These were also identified as areas for improvement. First, it was found to be important that the trainer was internal or knew ABB well, but also had comprehensive personal experience in the sales field. Secondly, the training included individual project work, so choosing the right topic for the project was found to be a key to success. If the topic was not related to the course content, the participant was not able to apply the learnings and tools from the program, which was the actual purpose of the project. Both individually and within their sales teams, the interviewed participants reported increased effectiveness and productivity as the most important result of the ESM program.

KEYWORDS: sales management training, training evaluation, success case method

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Oppiaine: Tuotantotalous
Opintojen aloitusvuosi: 2013
Tutkielman valmistumisvuosi: 2019 **Sivumäärä:** 119

TIIVISTELMÄ

Myyntipäällikön työtä voidaan pitää yhtenä vaativimmista ja tärkeimmistä johtotehtävistä, sillä myyntiosasto on ainoa osasto, joka tuo suoraan tuloja yritykselle. Viime vuosina monet yritykset ovat havainneet, että myyntipäälliköiden työtaitojen parantaminen koulutuksen avulla voi olla avain kilpailuedun saavuttamiseen, sillä myyntipäälliköt ovat vastuussa asiakasrajapinnan hallinnasta, joka puolestaan on kriittisin tekijä organisaation kokonaisvaltaisen menestyksen kannalta.

Tämä tutkimus on toteutettu toimeksiantona ABB:lle. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on arvioida ABB:n Effective Sales Management -koulutusohjelman tuloksia sekä löytää ohjelman mahdollisia kehityskohteita. Lisäksi tutkimuksessa pyritään tunnistamaan koulutuksen onnistumiseen tai epäonnistumiseen vaikuttavat kriittiset tekijät, jotta voitaisiin ymmärtää, miksi jotkut osallistujista saavuttavat parempia tuloksia kuin toiset osallistujat. Tämä tutkimus on toteutettu tapaustutkimuksena käyttäen Brinkerhoff:in (2003) success case metodia. Empiirinen data kerättiin kahdessa osassa. Ensimmäiseksi tutkimuksessa kerättiin onlinekyselyn avulla dataa 30 myyntipäälliköltä, jotka olivat suorittaneet Effective Sales Management -koulutusohjelman vuoden sisällä. Tämän jälkeen kymmenen huomattavan korkeat tai matalat pisteet kyselystä saanutta osallistujaa haastateltiin puolistrukturoitua haastattelua käyttäen.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että kouluttaja ja koulutuksessa toteutetun projektityön aihe olivat kriittisimmät tekijät koulutusohjelman menestyksen kannalta. Tutkimuksessa havaittiin olevan tärkeää, että kouluttaja on yrityksen sisältä tai tuntee ABB:n hyvin, jonka lisäksi hänellä on oltava kattava henkilökohtainen kokemus myyntityöstä. Toiseksi, koulutus sisälsi henkilökohtaisen projektityön, jonka aiheen valitseminen todettiin olevan avain menestykseen. Jos aihe ei liittynyt kurssin sisältöön, osallistuja ei kyennyt soveltamaan ohjelman opetuksia ja työkaluja, mikä oli projektin todellinen tarkoitus. Projektityö ja kouluttaja havaittiin myös tärkeimmiksi kehityskohteiksi internetpohjaisten koulutusmetodien kehittämisen lisäksi. Haastatellut kokivat ESM-ohjelman tärkeimpänä hyötynä sekä henkilökohtaisen että myyntitiiminsä tehokkuuden ja tuottavuuden kasvun.

AVAINSANAT: Myynnin johtamisen koulutus, koulutuksen arviointi, success case method

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introduction to the research topic. First, the background to this research is described, after which the research approach is presented, and the questions are formulated. After that, the case company of the thesis is presented. This study aims to evaluate the case company's Effective Sales Management training program, which will be introduced after the case company. Finally, the last subchapter provides an overview of the research structure.

1.1 Research background

Companies have increasingly identified that improving the sales managers' working skills through training can be a source of competitive advantage, as sales managers play an important role in the success of salespeople and are a critical link between the salesforce and the vision and values of a firm's upper management (Wieseke, Ahearne, Lam, & van Dick 2009; Kemp, Borders & Ricks 2013). Training sales managers is a strategically important topic, as their role is to ensure that the salespeople have the necessary tools and training to achieve the organization's goals related to taking care of customer relationships and increasing sales, profits and volumes (Cravens, Ingram, Laforge & Young 1993; Deeter-Schmelz, Kennedy & Goebel 2002).

Despite the strategic importance of the topic, it has been probably one of the most neglected areas in the personal selling and sales management literature. The change in role from being a salesperson to a becoming a sales manager is not an easy adjustment. Furthermore, success in the sales field is not a reliable indicator of success as a sales manager (Marchetti 2006). The sales manager requires an entirely different skill set than the salesperson, and studies have shown that giving a promotion to the best salesperson can in some cases result in a hiring a bad sales manager and losing an excellent sales person (Russ, McNeilly & Comer 1996).

The case company ABB is a multinational company, whose internal Effective Sales Management (ESM) program was launched in 2017. Generally, the purpose of this research is to evaluate the success of the ESM program, which is a six-month-long internal training program for first-line sales managers, with objectives to develop the sales team and strengthen the role of sales managers in driving profitable growth. This study aims to evaluate the program and the benefits ABB has achieved with the ESM program, in addition to finding which factors support the success of the program and how the program could be improved in the future.

1.2 Research approach

This research was conducted using a case study as a research strategy and the research process follows Brinkerhoff's (2003) Success Case Method. In this research, a mixed-methods approach is utilized for data collection, as both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were used. In the first data collection phase, quantitative data for the research was gathered from 30 sales managers through an online survey. After that, the interviewees were selected based on their questionnaire results by using extreme case sampling. Finally, the qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews from 10 participants with extremely high or low questionnaire results.

1.3 Research questions and objectives

The purpose of this research is to identify critical factors for the success and failure of the training, which will help to develop the program further and understand the root causes of the difference between successful and unsuccessful training outcomes for the participants. Moreover, this study aims to evaluate the results of the ESM program, as well as find areas for improvement

This study was executed by first sending a survey out to ESM participants who had completed the training within one year, after which the most successful and unsuccessful participants were invited for interviews, based on their questionnaire results. The training evaluation was conducted by using Brinkerhoff's (2003) Success Case Method. In addition to answering the research questions, this study aims to identify success stories from the ESM program participants for internal marketing and show the value of the training to the top-management.

There are three detailed research questions for the study:

Research question 1: What factors support or prevent the success of the training?

Research question 2: What benefits has ABB achieved with the Effective Sales Management program?

Research question 3: How could the Effective Sales Management program be improved?

1.4 Case company of the thesis: ABB

ABB Group is a global industrial company, which works closely with utility, transport, industry and infrastructure customers. It employs around 136,000 people in more than 100 countries. The company has a long heritage of over 130 years, and it was formed in 1998 when the Swedish company ASEA and Swiss company BBC merged. Nowadays ABB has its headquarters in Zurich in Switzerland and its revenues in 2017 were over 34,312 billion USD. (ABB 2018.)

Today ABB Group holds four global divisions: Electrification Products (EP), Robotics and Motion (RM), Industrial Automation (IA), and Power Grids (PG). These divisions, in turn, are divided into business units focused on particular industries and product

categories. ABB is a global leader in the field of power and automation technologies, and it funds around $1.5 billion in research and development every year. (ABB 2018.)

1.5 The Effective Sales Management program

ABB's Effective Sales Management program (ESM) is ABB's internal training program for first-line sales managers. The main target group of the program are sales managers with at least one year of experience in a sales management position or other relevant similar level managerial positions. The duration of the program is six months and it provides key insights into the sales manager's role, building direction for sales (market analysis, customer segmentation, the go-to-market model, sales force structure, and account management), leading sales performance (annual planning and KPIs, opportunity management, leading sales activities) and developing the sales team (customer focus, leadership and development, and needs analysis).

The program is a blended learning program, which includes webinars, homework, e-learning modules, face-to-face workshops, a sales simulator, and project work. The e-learning modules include the theory, whereas the purpose of the workshops is to provide practice and reflection based on the learning from the e-learning modules. The webinars provide reflection on the learning, instructions for the homework, and support the participants with their project work.

The program uses experiential learning through a development project defined by the participant in order to put key learning points into practice according to action plans and project work agreed with participants' senior managers. Additionally, it is the senior managers' role to follow-up and coach the participants during the program. The goal of the program is to help drive a sales transformation within the sales teams to increase market share through well-defined targets, effective sales processes and ensuring superior customer satisfaction and achieving the sales goals.

The learning objectives for the program are to develop the sales team and strengthen the role of the sales managers in driving profitable growth. Upon completion of this program, the participants will be able to drive the sales transformation forward using the available processes and tools effectively and should be able to improve sales productivity and individual effectiveness.

1.6 Research structure

This research proceeds with the following structure. This research consists of five main chapters. The first chapter introduces the research. The second chapter is a literature review and provides an overview of the relevant literature and the previous research. In the third chapter, the research methodology is presented with a description of the research process step by step. The fourth chapter summarizes the results and finally, the last chapter concludes the study.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on the earlier research related to sales management training and training evaluation. First, the definition of training is discussed. Secondly, the existing literature on sales management training is presented with an overview of the most effective and must utilized training approaches for sales managers. Next, the theory of training evaluation and lack of it are discussed with a description of different levels of training. Moreover, Brinkerhoff's (2004) Success Case Method, which is used in the empirical part of the thesis, is presented. Finally, the last section discusses the main reasons training fails.

2.1 Definition of training

Training can be understood as the process of acquiring proficiency at some skill or skill set where the outcome can be measured by the learner's ability to demonstrate the learned skill by producing desired outputs (Smith 2013). Noe (2010: 5) describe training as an organization's efforts planned to help employees acquire job-related competencies, and where the goal is to get employees to apply and transfer what they learn into their jobs. Similarly, Edralin (2004) underlines the organizational point of view and describes training is as "a set of activities aimed to facilitate learning of knowledge, attitude, and skills among its people in the organization to improve their current job performance and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals".

Edens & Bell (2003) state that training is one of the most penetrative methods for improving the productivity of employees and communicating organizational goals to new personnel. As a conclusion, training provides employees with sufficient skills and knowledge which enhance their individual potential and capabilities, but also contributes to the overall value of the organization as well as its business development.

2.2 Sales management training

It has been proposed that the sales manager's job is one of the toughest and most important in management since the sales department is the only department that directly brings dollars into the company (Chitwood 2007). The sales manager's role is to work as a critical link between the salespeople, the company's strategy, and the vision and values of a company's upper management (Shepherd & Ridnour 1995; Wieseke et al. 2009). Moreover, the sales manager has an important role in the organization's ability to achieve its objectives related to sales volumes and profits as well as customer relationships (Deeter-Schmelz et al. 2002).

Recently, many companies have recognized that the sales managers' responsibility is to manage the entire interface with the customer and that this is one of the most critical factors contributing to the final success of the organization. Furthermore, improving the sales managers' working skills through training can be a source of competitive advantage for the company (Czinkota, Kotabe, & Mercer 1997: 494; Davenport & Prusak 1998).

2.2.1 Existing literature on sales management training

Despite the strategic importance of the topic, sales management training has probably been one of the most neglected areas in the personal selling and sales management literature, considering that there have been only a few sales management training studies in the literature over the past 30 years (Shepherd et. al 1995; Anderson, Mehta, and Strong 1997; Dubinsky, Mehta & Anderson 2001; Powers, DeCarlo & Gupte 2010; Shepherd, Gordon, Ridnour, Weilbaker & Lambert 2011; Gordon, Shepherd, Lambert, Ridnour, & Weilbaker 2012). The most important previous studies are presented in Table 1 on the next page. Since most of the studies were written decades ago, the relevance of some of the existing research may be questionable. Over the past few decades, there have been significant technological, economic, cultural and demographic changes that might have influenced sales management training methods (Powers et al. 2010), which must be taken into account. As Dubinsky et al. (2001) argued already nearly twenty years ago that "such

conditions that worked for sales managers in the past most likely will not work in the future".

Table 1. Previous research of sales management training.

Researchers	Publication	Purpose
Shepherd & Ridnour 1995	*"The training of sales managers: an exploratory study of sales management training practices"*	Presents the current practices used in sales managers training in American businesses.
Anderson, Mehta & Strong 1997	*"An empirical investigation of sales management training programs for sales managers"*	Investigates the availability and characteristics of sales management training programs from the perspectives of sales managers.
Dubinsky, Mehta & Anderson 2001	*"Satisfaction with sales manager training - design and implementation issues"*	Examines the relationship between trainee satisfaction and program format, site, instructor, instructional method and content of the program.
Powers, DeCarlo & Gupte 2010	*"An update on the status of sales management training. journal of personal selling & sales management"*	Investigates current practices of sales management training programs in terms of delivery and content.
Shepherd, Gordon, Ridnour, Weilbaker & Lambert 2011	*"Sales manager training practices in small and large firms"*	Investigates sales manager training practices and differences between small and large firms.
Gordon, Shepherd, Lambert, Ridnour, & Weilbaker 2012	*"The training of sales managers: current practices"*	Examines current practices of sales manager training methods, approaches and instructors and their effectiveness, frequency, and assessment.

Anderson, Mehta, and Strong (1997) discovered that only two studies were reported in the literature in the 30 years prior to 1995. According to Anderson et al (1997), a study by Adams in 1965 found that just one of 44 responding companies in the United States provided any sales management training, while fifteen years later, a study by Coppett and

Staples (1980) discovered that less than half of the responding companies across 16 industries in the United States provided any sales management training. Anderson et al. (1997) conducted significant research into the status of sales management training programs and the content and delivery methods of the training, and they found that only 43 percent of firms provided any sales management training. They also found that sales managers were often trained only after they had risen to senior management positions, for example to positions of regional, general or national sales managers. They suggest that one reason for this could be that top-management feels that training is needed more at the levels where decisions impact the company more significantly (Anderson et al. 1997).

In 1995, Shepherd et al. investigated the content of sales management training programs in 93 companies in the United States. They evaluated the effectiveness simply by asking respondents to give ratings about different factors of training approaches on a scale of 1 to 7. They reported that instead of focusing on traditional sales management skills such as motivation skills, coaching and time management abilities, there was a need to incorporate business skills development into training practices. Later in 2010, Powers, DeCarlo & Gupte repeated the survey by Anderson et al. (1997) with the aim to evaluate the present status of sales management training. Afterward, Gordon et al. (2012) completed a study of sales management training practices, based largely upon the earlier studies by Shepherd et al. (1995) and Dubinsky et al. (2001). They found that even though a wide variety of training approaches, instructors, and methodology were utilized in sales management training, no one type was viewed as being highly effective in the training of sales managers (Gordon et al. 2012). While the other studies were focused on the training practices used in sales management training, Dubinsky et al. (2001) evaluated the relationship between trainee satisfaction and program factors.

The earlier studies showed that most companies did not offer any formal development for their sales managers, and the offered training has designed mostly for senior-level managers (Anderson et al 1997; Dubinsky et. al 2001). The later studies show the raised prevalence of sales management training in companies. Powers et al. (2010) discovered that over 91 percent of their respondents had received sales management training during

their careers. Moreover, the current studies show that training is now received at an earlier stage than in the prior studies. Earlier, Anders et al. (1995) found that sales managers were often trained only after they had risen to senior management positions, while later studies show that the majority of companies are now providing sales management training at an early career stage (Powers et al. 2010). Still, there is no adequate training being currently provided to sales managers. This can be concluded from the low mean effectiveness of the scores in all training factors and the frequency of the training provided, which is less than one day per month (Gordon et al. 2012). As Kahle (2005) claims, the sales manager's job is too often the most under-trained job in the entire organization.

2.2.2 How sales managers should be trained

Often there is an assumption that outstanding sales skills are sufficient to allow a sales manager to lead sales team effectively (Wilkinson 2009), even though the sales manager requires an entirely different skill set than the salesperson (Russ et al. 1996). Moreover, studies have shown that sometimes giving a promotion to the best salesperson can result in a hiring a bad sales manager and losing an excellent sales person (Russ et al. 1996), as sales managers can have difficulties when making the switch from "doing" to "managing" (Anders et al. 1997).

Sales managers have hundreds of sales competencies (Lambert, Ohai & Kerkhoff 2009) and specific skills (Peters 2007) they must know to in order to be successful. In addition they require managerial and administrative abilities and leadership skills to motivate salespeople toward attainment of both individual and organizational goals (Anders et al. 1997). That emphasizes the role of the sales management training and the importance of choosing the right ways to deliver the training. Gordon et al. (2012) found that sales managers are often trained on products, not on management. Moreover, the sales managers' level in the sales management hierarchy affects the required skills and training content, as the requirements of the positions change markedly at a higher level. Anderson et al. (1992) propose that sales managers at lower levels need "supervisory ability",

intermediate managers “managerial ability” and upper-level managers “administrative and leadership ability”.

The frequency, duration, and assessment of sales management training vary widely between organizations (Gordon et al 2012), as well as the suggested training approaches in different studies. There are five key issues to address while designing and accomplishing training programs; the program format, site, instructor, instructional method and content (e.g. Dubinsky et al. 2001; Bushnell 1990). These issues, as well as the role of the senior manager, will be discussed next based on the existing literature on sales management training practices.

Training approaches - what format should be used to deliver the training?

The results in the research on the most effective and most used training approaches varies a lot, as the response options were different in each study. A common factor in these results seems to be the effectiveness of “action-oriented training approaches”. Dubisky (2001) found that the use of on-the-job coaching from superiors or peers was found to lead to higher trainee satisfaction than the use of written training material or external training formats, for example, external seminars or college courses. They suggest that using action-oriented training methods will lead to higher trainee satisfaction, as sales managers are “learning as they go”.

Moreover, on-the-job training or coaching were found to be most effective and most widely used training approaches (Anderson et al 1997; Powers et al. 2010; Shepherd et al. 2011; Gordon et al. 2012). More “passive” training approaches, such as home study, video conferencing and “wikis, blogs and online courses” received the lowest effectiveness ratings (Gordon et al. 2012; Stepherd et al. 1995).

Location – where should the training be held?

Stepherd et al. (1995) found that participants rated the corporate home office as the most effective location, followed by hotels and regional/field offices. Nearly twenty-years later

Stepherd et al (2012) discovered that the same locations remained the most effective and most used locations for large firms. In contrast, they received comments highlighting the benefits of organizing training away from the office due to its social aspect; in the hotel, participants spend all day and night together, so there is more time for chatting and interacting about the ways to get smarter and perform better.

On the other hand, Anderson (1997) discovered that the primary site used in sales management training was “on-the-job”, followed by in the company’s training facilities or training facilities of another firm hired by their company. Powers et al. (2010) discovered that the majority of their respondents reported that training was conducted at the facilities of another firm hired by their organization, followed by on-the-job training. Powers et al. (2010) suggest that based on their findings, companies tend to rely on professional training firms to fulfill their training needs.

Dubisky et al. (2001) discovered how the training site was associated with satisfaction. They found that trainees were more satisfied when the training was held within the firm (at its own training facilities or on-the-job) than when the training was held off-site, for example at the location of another company or in a college. Dubisky et al. (2001) suggest that one reason is that on-site training is more likely to be tailored to the specific needs of the trainees, and this will possibly increase training satisfaction.

Instructor – who should train sales managers?

Gordon et al. (2012) state that the training should be provided in the field by those who are either senior managers or more knowledgeable on the training topic than the sales managers themselves. Powers et al. (2010) reported that the majority of companies used their own company’s management training staff as instructors, followed by independent sales management consultants, who were also the most used instructors according to Anderson et al. (1997). In contrast, Shepherd et al. (2011) and Gordon et al. (2012) reported that internal instructors are most commonly used and more effective than external trainers. Senior sales managers especially were rated as the most effective trainers.

Moreover, Dubinsky et al. (2001) evaluated that use of the company's sales managers is more satisfying to trainee sales managers than the utilization of a firm's non-sales personnel or external trainers. This is most probably because a company's senior sales managers are knowledgeable about particular circumstances and conditions that the sales managers face because they have extensive experience within their firm and industry, and that experience is something that academic or external trainers are unlikely to have (Dubinsky et al. 2001). Additionally, their research showed that training satisfaction was significantly higher when it was conducted by internal non-sales personnel than by external trainers, which supports the importance of having internal experience of the company

Gordon et al. (2012) state that companies should focus on using the sales knowledge and talent they have within the organization. Additionally, Gordon et al. (2012) suggest that organizations should focus more on training their trainers, as "just as a successful salesperson may not become a successful sales manager, it is as likely that an individual who is a successful sales manager may not inherently possess the requisite skills to successfully teach others needed skills".

Training methods – what training methods should be used?

The training methods used support the findings as the recommended training approaches in that training methods need to be highly participative and interactive (Stepherd et al. 1995; Gordon et al. 2012). Moreover, Gordon et al. (2012) state that for the sales manager, learning methods where sales managers have the opportunity to process and think about other viewpoints are the most effective for achieving learning. On the other hand, a prerequisite for success in any method is that students are motivated, enthusiastic, and take their roles seriously (Sogunro 2004). In contrast to other studies, Dubinsky et al. (2001) found generally that that the used training method does not seem to have any significant influence on improving training satisfaction.

Group discussions, role plays, case studies, workshops and field travel are most found to be most used and most effective training methods in every study (Shepherd et al. 1995; Anderson et al 1997; Powers et al. 2010; Shepherd et al. 2011 and Gordon et al.2012). Sogunro (2004) defines role-playing "as a learning activity in which participants act out a set of defined role behaviors or position with a view to acquiring desired experiences". His study about the efficacy of role-playing pedagogy in leadership training demonstrated that role-plays help to link theory and practice in a more practical way and people learn much more rapidly from role-plays than they can learn from traditional methods.

A study by Powers et al. (2010) also found that Internet-based training methods, which were omitted or rarely mentioned in earlier empirical studies, were used by 53% of the respondents. In 2011, Shepherd et al. found that Internet-based training methods have become common in large firms when nearly 90 percent reported using them, but that these methods were still rarely used in small firms. Moreover, their study raised an observation related to the inverse relationship between the age of sales managers and the comfort level linked to utilizing the Internet for training. However, it must be taken into account that Internet-based training methods have developed considerably since these studies.

The content of the training

As mentioned earlier, sales managers need many different skills to be successful sales managers, which means sales managers need training in a wide variety of topic areas. This is supported by Stepherd et al. (2011), who discovered that over 70 percent of large firms provided coverage for all 32 sales management training topics asked about in their study.

Powers et al. (2010) note that sales process, leadership, and evaluation and control activities are the most important topics for sales management training. Furthermore, the research conducted by Shepherd et al. (2011) supports his findings and highlights the importance of topics pertaining to the sales process, such as account management, negotiation, strategic selling, and value-added selling. It has been proved that there are differences according to gender, as female sales managers will place greater importance

than men on behavior-based training topics and topics such as communication and team dynamics (Piercy, Cravens & Lane 2003; Powers et al. 2010).

Chakrabarty et al. (2008) describe that the prerequisite for being a successful sales manager is the capability to coach salespeople. They recommended sales managers to provide positive feedback and to demonstrate adaptive selling techniques to their salespeople to improve their productivity. Dubinsky et al. (2001) state that personnel management topics are not critical for the effectiveness of sales management training; furthermore, the program content should focus especially on general management activities for lower-level sales managers and for higher-level managers on sales strategy-related issues, planning activities, control topics, and areas concerning the management of channel relations.

The senior manager's role

The senior manager has a crucial role in sales management training, but only in later studies has it been recognized as an important factor for successful training (Gordon et al. 2012; Shepherd et al. 2011). The senior management role is to support and encourage positive behavior changes (Shepherd et al. 2011), as well as come to grips with post-training issues so that real change can occur (Gordon et al. 2012).

Shepherd et al. (2011) state that if sales managers do not receive the needed support or are held accountable for changing their behavior post-training, the desired change will either not occur or will revert back to the undesired behavior exhibited prior to the training. They suggest that sales managers should be rewarded (or penalized) for using (or not using) the lessons gleaned from the training because if any change in behavior does not occur, the training is a waste of both time and money.

2.3 The evaluation of training programs

Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle (2006: 317) describe training programs as "a set of specific activities designed for an intended purpose with quantifiable goals and objectives". The definitions of "training program evaluation" vary widely from researcher to researcher. Lee et al. (2017) define training program evaluation as a process of measuring the value of the training program by evaluating the program's results, or by evaluating the entire process including the program's aims, content, and implementation, or by using both of these methods simultaneously. The aim of the process is to identify the program's value, the achievement of its objectives, and its effectiveness. Otherwise, Edralin (2004) describes training evaluation as the measurement of the success or effectiveness of training, aiming to establish whether an investment in the training has paid off.

In the educational literature, training program evaluation is separated from research by its purpose; program evaluation is used for decision-making whereas research is used to inform practice and to build knowledge and general understanding on a particular topic. Program evaluation mainly investigates programs with the aim to determine their worth and to make recommendations for improvements (Lodico et al. 2006: 317).

Usually, training effectiveness is defined based on how well the set objectives and results, considering the methods, needs and other areas of training administration, are achieved (Edralin 2004). Punia and Kant (2013: 153) conclude that training effectiveness is the degree to which the training achieves the requested objectives. Noe (2010: 189) confirms their view by stating that effective training is designed with the goal of teaching behaviors and skills which help the company to achieve its goals.

2.3.1 Why training programs should be evaluated

In today's constant technological advancement and globally competitive market, people are the most important resource of the company and a source of added value. In recent years, employee training has become a basic practice in developing a company's

competitive advantage, especially in environments of dramatic and rapid change (Castellanos & Martin 2011; Lee et al. 2014). Despite that those companies that carry out training activities are more profitable than those companies that do not carry them out, and that investing in developing training programs produces economic results for the company (Castellanos et al. 2011), in many companies the effort and resources invested in developing and training human capital are viewed as a cost instead of an investment (Lynch, Akridge, Schaffer & Gray 2006). This makes it an easy first target for expense reductions (Johnson et al. 2005).

Determining the effectiveness of training programs is important issue in training and development, as it helps to identify strengths and weaknesses and further improve the program. It also helps to identify who gains the most and least benefit from the program and it provides information for decision makers about the costs and financial benefits of the program (Van Buuren & Edelenbos 2013: 19; Noe 2010: 219). An era of limited resources and requirements for higher accountability have made it more important to determine which sort training evaluation should be used (Schweigert 2006). Kraiger (2002) summarizes the purposes for training evaluation in three main points: decision making, feedback, and marketing. In addition to determining the cost and the financial benefits of the program, the collected material can be utilized for marketing the program; for example, participants' positive experiences and whether they would recommend the program to others (Noe 2010: 219).

Barnett & Mattox (2010) state two things that training evaluation usually accomplishes. First, it measures the effectiveness of the training and second, it identifies the areas that need to be revised. Similarly, Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick (2006: 17-18) listed three specific reasons why training evaluation is crucial and why companies should evaluate their training. First, to authorize the budget and importance of the training department by showing to top management how the training supports the company's goals and objectives by demonstrating tangible, positive training results. Second, and the most common reason, is to accumulate data on how to improve training programs in the future - whether the program effective and how it could be improved. The third reason is to help determine whether the training program is worth continuing or whether it should be

dropped. The program should be dropped or modified if the costs of the training outbalance the benefits. Additionally, training evaluation may involve the comparison of the different training program, and training versus other, non-training development investments (Noe 2010: 219). Hence, it could be concluded that evaluation is an essential and critical part of the organization's training efforts.

2.3.2 Reasons for not evaluating training

The main reasons that companies do not evaluate their training include a lack of expertise in evaluation techniques and difficulties in identifying and measuring outcomes (Karim, Huda, Khan 2012; Twitchell, Holton & Trott 2000). Brinkerhoff (2006) notes that evaluation methods often have a limited focus on participant satisfaction and future objectives and the use of accurate evaluation models is too difficult, costly, time intensive and impractical for most companies. Lee et al. (2017) explain that even though training evaluation offers many benefits, it also needs material and human resources.

Patel (2010) explain that one main challenge of training evaluation is the complexity of measuring the direct and indirect benefits of training and development and to link them to business results (Patel 2010; Santos & Stuart 2003). Johnson et al. (2005) explain that the incapacity to receive appropriate information from the company database is the main reason companies do not evaluate their training. Moreover, an American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) study from 2009 shows that learning management systems (LMS) do not support the required data collection, and 82 percent of learning and HR professionals argue that their LMS do not succeed in producing sufficient measurements. In addition, Moldovan (2016) argues that organizational constraints substantially limit opportunities for collecting results data.

2.3.3 Five levels of training evaluation

During the 1950s, Donald Kirkpatrick, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, developed the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model for evaluating training programs. The model

is a 4-level approach that helps to measure the effectiveness of customized corporate training programs. Donald Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model is the most widely used and well-known evaluation in the world, and around 92% of the top 100 U.S. companies evaluate their training effectiveness using Kirkpatrick's model. The model includes four levels of evaluation to demonstrate a link between training and change, which are: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. (Kirkpatrick et al. 2006.) In 1996, Jack J. Phillip developed Kirkpatrick's model by adding the ROI of training and development as a fifth level. These five levels have commonly used to describe the different dimensions of training and will be explained next.

Kirkpatrick's model was developed in the 1950s, after which a large number of new training evaluation models have been developed and many of them have used Kirkpatrick's method as a basis for their thinking. In Kirkpatrick's model, each level is significant and influences the next level. At each level, the evaluation becomes more challenging and time-consuming. Nevertheless, none of the levels should not be ignored because every level grants more valuable training information than the earlier levels. (Kirkpatrick et al 2006: 21.) Similarly, Moldovan (2016) illustrates that while the evaluation of intervention increases at each level, the complexity of the evaluation ascends. The first two levels focus on trainee evaluation, while the last two levels focus more on employer evaluation, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

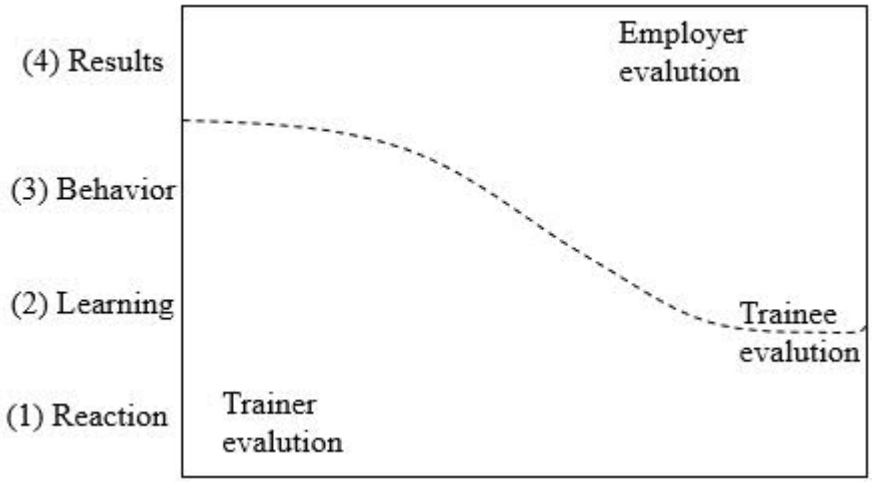

Figure 1. Source of evaluation for reaction and results (Moldovan 2016).

Level 1 – Reaction

Level 1 in Kirkpatrick's evaluation model is the reaction level, which measures the participants' reactions to the training, which is typically seen as a measure of customer satisfaction. Typically, to determine the participants' reaction, comments about the training content, instructors, training materials, facilities, and delivery methods are needed from the participants. Participants in training programs are also customers, even during in-house programs, and customer satisfaction is crucial for repeat business. The reaction is usually measured with a reaction sheet, or as some trainers call them, happiness sheets. The responses should be tabulated and analyzed for further utilization. The results can help to determine the effectiveness of the program and learn how it could be improved, and training programs should be modified accordingly based on the collected feedback. (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick 2006: 27-41.)

There are several reasons why measuring the reactions is important. First, reactions give the trainer valuable feedback, comments and suggestions on how to evaluate the program and improve future programs. Second, it gives the participants the opportunity to give feedback to the trainer and tells them that the trainer is there to help them to improve their working abilities. Third, feedback sheets can provide managers and other concerned

parties with quantitative information about the program. Finally, the quantitative information collected from the reaction sheets can be used to establish standards of performance for programs in the future. (Kirkpatrick et al. 2006: 27.)

However, many studies have shown a poor correlation between reactions and learning (Alliger and Janak 1989; Holton 1996; Sitzmann, Brown & Bauer 2008). Holton (1996) summarized numerous studies to indicate that there is just little correlation between reactions and learning and argues that reaction evaluations should be removed from evaluation models. Furthermore, Sitzmann et al. (2008) criticize the use of self-assessments, as their research showed that self-assessment of course satisfaction is only lightly linked to learning and satisfied students do not learn more than dissatisfied students. They also found that self-assessment can be useful for capturing motivation and satisfaction but that it is not relevant for evaluating actual knowledge. However, studies on a causal relationship between reaction and learning are contradictory, as some studies have also found a positive relationship between the variables (i.e. Blanchard, Thacker & Way 2000; Clement 1982).

Level 2 – Learning

The second level evaluates learning. A trainer can teach three kinds of things to participants, which are knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Learning evaluation is crucial, because without learning changes in behavior will not appear. The required testing method depends on the learning objectives. Increased knowledge is the easiest aspect to measure, for example, by asking the participants to complete a test related to the content of the program before and after the training. (Kirkpatrick et al. 2006: 42, 50.)

If the learning objective is an attitude, this can be measured with a pen-and-paper test by designing an attitude survey and comparing participant's attitudes before and after taking part in the training program. In such cases, it is important that the participants give honest answers instead of the answers that we want them to give. If the learning objectives include skills, a performance test is necessary. If it is possible that participants have had some of the skills taught previously, a pretest will be necessary, however, the posttest

alone is sufficient to measure the extent to which participants have learned the skills requested. (Kirkpatrick et al. 2006: 50-51.)

Level 3 – Behavior

The third level of the Kirkpatrick evaluation model is behavior, which is often phrased in the training literature as training transfer. This is a concept that directly relates to reducing the gap between training and performance (Lee et al. 2014). Cheng & Ho (2001) determined a training transfer as "the application of knowledge, skills and attitudes learned from training on the job and subsequent maintenance of them over a certain period of time", while Laker & Powell (2011) define training transfer as "the extent to which what is learned in training is applied on the job and enhances job-related performance". Kirkpatrick et al. (2016:61) determine the behavior level as the scope of the change in the participant's job behavior which has occurred because of attending the training program.

A positive change in behavior is always needed before any final results can be expected. (Kirkpatrick et al. 2006: 22, 61). The goal for evaluating the training transfer is to confirm the degree to which the participants can apply the skills, attitudes, and knowledge from the training program to their effectively work (Lee et al. 2017). A variety of factors, such training design, managerial support, individual characteristics, and organizational climate, have been identified as influencing the training transfer (Baldwin & Ford 1988; Holton, Bates & Ruona 2000).

Training transfer is one of the most important approaches in evaluating the effectiveness of a training program. The evaluation process is often complicated and difficult to carry out, which discourages most trainers from evaluating changes in behavior (Kirkpatrick et al. 2006: 61). MacKie (2007) states that most of the training does occur on the third level in terms of behavioral changes. Research shows that only 10-20 percent of managers transfer their training successfully into practice in their work (Vellios & Kirkpatrick 2007). The inability to transfer training usually results in an extremely costly waste of energy, time and money, and the annual cost has been estimated to be from $50 billion to $200 billion per year (Laker et al. 2011).

Level 4 – Results

Level four measures the changes in business results that have occurred because the participants have attended the program and it provides the greatest evaluation challenge to training professionals. Results may include aspects such as increased production, sales increases, reduced costs, waste reduction or product quality improvements. These sorts of tangible results are the actual reason for having the training program and the final aims for the training program need to be stated in these terms. The results can also consist of less tangible aspects such as motivation, improved leadership skills, higher morale, better communication skills and time management, managing change or decision making. These kinds of topics are not possible to measure in monetary terms, but it is hoped that tangible results will follow later on a long-term basis since we should be able to show that the value of the training is more than the cost of the training. (Kirkpatrick et al. 2006: 25-26, 69.)

Furthermore, the training results can be divided into hard data, which includes technical results, and soft data, which includes intrapersonal and interpersonal results (Laker et al. 2011; Phillips 1996). Hard data, which is often referred to as hard skills, is the traditional approach to measuring organizational performance. Hard data is objective, accessible to measure and easy to translate into financial values. On the other hand, soft data is usually used to measure soft skills, for example, communication skills. In contrast to hard data, soft data is subjective because it is to do with behavior, and it is hard to measure, and difficult to translate into financial values. (Phillips 1996.) Phillips' (1996) categories of hard and soft data are presented in Table 2. According to a study by Laker et al. (2011), there is a significant difference between soft-skills training and hard-skills training when comparing the transfer from training to the job. They found that soft-skills training is significantly less likely to transfer from training to the job than hard-skills training.

Table 2. Hard and soft values according to Phillips (1996).

Hard Data	Soft Data	
Outputs - Units produced - Items assembled or sold - Forms processed Quality - Scrap - Waste - Rework - Product defects or rejects Cost - Overhead - Sales expenses - Variable costs Time - Equipment Downtime - Employee overtime - Time to complete projects - Training time	Work habits - Employee absenteeism - Tardiness - Visits to dispensary - Safety-rule violations New Skills - Decisions made - Frequency in using new skills - Conflicts avoided - Problems solved Attitudes - Employee loyalty - Employees' self-confidence - Employees' perceptions of job responsibilities - Perceived changes in performance	Work Climate - Employee grievances - Employee turnover - Discrimination charges - Job satisfaction Initiative - Implementation of new ideas - Successful completion of projects - Number of employee suggestion Development and Advancement Number of promotions or pay increases - Number of training programs attended - Request for transfer - Performance appraisal ratings

Criticism

Even though Kirkpatrick's evaluation model has been widely used in companies since it was published, it has also come under a great amount of criticism. Pearson (2011) criticizes Kirkpatrick's evaluation model because of the costs, time and capacity limitations. He also notes that many companies use the four-level framework only partially and carry out the evaluating only up to level 2, leaving behavioral changes and organizational results unevaluated. Abernathy (1993) demonstrates that Kirkpatrick's model is no fit for evaluating so-called soft-values and suggests that training should be evaluated using a balanced view that takes into consideration soft-and hard-skill performance meters, tangible and intangible benefits, and both short- and long-term results.

Lee et. al (2017) report that the Kirkpatrick model has received criticism also because it focuses only on the performance of the training program, without taking into account any environmental factors. Bates (2004) identifies that the model simplifies and excludes the various environmental elements surrounding the training, which are the factors that affect the effectiveness of the training. Bates (2004) highlights the limitations of the model. First, he points out that the model presents an oversimplified view of training effectiveness that does not recognize contextual or individual influences in the evaluation of the training, such as it assumes that positive reactions lead to greater learning. Second, the model assumes that each level of evaluation provides more informative data than the last level.

Brinkerhoff (2006: 41) criticizes Kirkpatrick's model by indicating that it analysis training as an object of the evaluation without focusing on the larger performance entirety. He lists three significant and essential risks of a training-focused evaluation strategy. First, it ignores the performance system factors, which often undermine the impact of the training. Second, it weakens performance partnerships with line management, as it misrepresents the process and the role of training in performance management. Third, it is unsuccessful in providing accurate and relevant feedback that managers need to be able to guide performance improvement. Therefore, to address the general frustrations with existing training evaluation models, he developed the Success Case Method, which will be presented in the next section.

Level 5: Return on investment (ROI)

The fifth level of training evaluation measures the ROI of training and development and was developed by Jack J. Phillip in 1996. The ROI of a training program can be measured by comparing the cost of implementation in order to value the investment. Before performing the calculation, the training-related costs must be determined. The ROI of a training program is widely used, and around 67% among the top 100 U.S. companies evaluate their training effectiveness using a measure of the return on investment. (Kirkpatrick et al. 2006.)

Noe (2010: 240) points out that information on training cost is important for the following reasons: to understand the total expenditures on training, to compare the costs of alternative training programs, to evaluate the proportion of money spent on training development, administration, and evaluation, as well as to compare the money spent on training for different groups of employees and to control training costs. Moreover, Bashrum (2012) defines that training-related costs include the average salary of the attendees and tuition costs loaded per student, including the instructor, revenue costs, courseware, snacks, and administrative costs. The formula for calculating the ROI is as follows:

$$\text{ROI (\%)} = \frac{(\text{Benefits} - \text{costs})*100}{\text{costs}}$$

There are several reasons why the interest in return on investment (ROI) calculation has increased and the model has become so widely used. Phillips (1996) points out that one of the most influential drivers is probably the pressure to show a return on the training investment to clients and senior managers. He indicates that the second pressure come from cuts.

Figure 2 represents a typical distribution of training results and the return on the training investment (ROI), according Brinkerhoff (2006: 26-27). In the area of positive ROI, the results are indeed greater than the cost of providing and supporting the training for these people. That surplus value has been spent to train those people whose distribution was exceeded by the value of the results they achieved, and who are represented in the area of negative ROI. The area of negative ROI can be seen also as an area of possible unrealized value. If the number of people who get positive results from the training can be increased, the overall ROI of the training will increase dramatically, because the cost of training all of the people in the distribution is roughly the same for each person. (Brinkerhoff 2006: 26-27.)

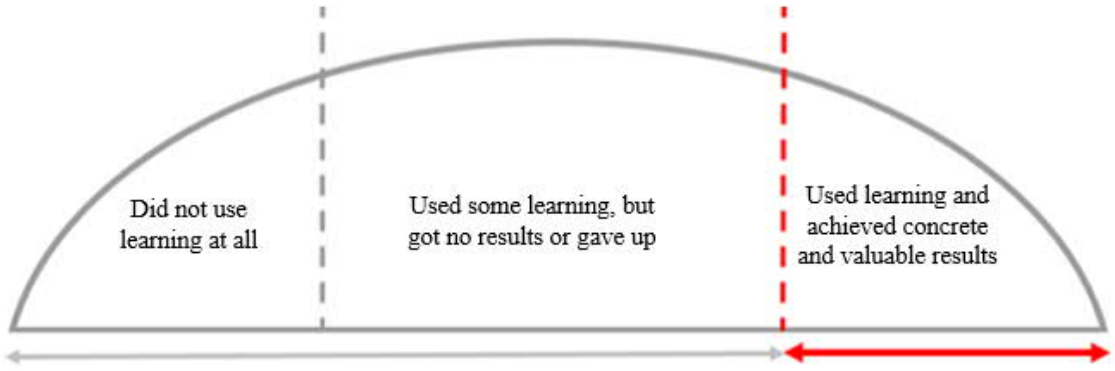

Figure 2. Predictable distribution of training impact and ROI.

Even though ROI is a popular and widely used tool for evaluating training benefits, it cannot take all the benefits into consideration. Millis (1997) claims that it is not possible to calculate the value of the so-called "soft" benefits of training, such as improved morale, better communication skills, or stronger confidence. This fact does not mean that the soft benefits of training are not as crucial to an organization as other benefits. Smith (2013) states that general rule is that if the ROI of the training is less than 3:1, then the training should not be considered if it is not required.

2.3.4 Brinkerhoff's Success Case Method

The Success Case Method (SCM) is an accurately designed, simple and quick way to get useful information on a training program. It determines what results are being achieved, what is working and what is not, and how the training can be improved (Brinkerhoff 2003: viii). Brinkerhoff's Success Case Method uses a small number of questions and instead of focusing on average scores, the focus is on the leaners who provide extremely high or low ratings to determine causes of success and failure (Brinkerhoff 2003: 3). The method identifies the critical factors for the success and failure of training transfer, and it is useful for qualitatively estimating and validating the effectiveness of training programs (Choi & Lee 2011).

The SCM can be used to find answers to four key questions. An SCM study can be used to obtain answers to any, or all of them (Brinkerhoff 2003: 6-7):

1. What is really happening?
2. What results, if any, is the program helping to produce?
3. What is the value of the results?
4. How could the initiative be improved?

A success case study has a simple structure, which has divided into two parts. The first part focuses on identifying potential "success cases" – those individuals who have been most successful in using a newly trained method or implementing a change due to the training, and it is usually accomplished with a survey. In the second part, the identified success cases are interviewed to determine and document the actual nature of achieved success. Typically, a success case study results in a small number of documented success cases. This is usually enough to effectively illustrate the scope and nature of the success that the program is helping to produce. (Brinkerhoff 2003: 16.)

Brinkerhoff (2006: 19) indicates that there are two realities of training programs which need to be taken into account and adequately dealt with, as they dramatically influence our thinking and the way we conduct the evaluation of the training. The first of these is the reality that the results of training are very predictable. The findings are almost always the same: some people have used their learnings in a way that get great results, and some have not used their learnings at all, as presented earlier in Figure 2. The goal of the SCM is to gain knowledge from the successful trainees to help more trainees to achieve similar levels of success.

Usually, a success case study also evaluates the cases of non-success. In almost every study, there are a small group of individuals who have been very successful, but likewise there are often a group of learners who have experienced no use or value. Studying the reasons behind the lack of success can be very useful and enlightening, especially when comparisons are made between those two groups. (Brinkerhoff 2003: 17.)

In addition to the evaluation results, SCM increases the ability to provide convincing business arguments to senior management for investing in the training by determining how the training could be improved (Brinkerhoff & Mooney 2008). On the other hand, a weakness of SCM is its non-generalizability, but also that the method does not produce a representative picture of the study sample (Medina et al. 2015).

2.4 Main reasons training fails

There is a great deal of research about factors which can cause the failure or success of training. Laker et al. (2011) state that the content of the training does not have a crucial impact on successful training transfer, whereas a variety of factors, such the training design, managerial support, individual characteristics, and organizational climate, have been identified as having an on influence training transfer (Baldwin & Ford 1988; Holton et al. 2000). McLean & Moss (2003) state that participant's dissatisfaction with the program, a failure to accomplish the learning objectives or the factors beyond the scope of the program, for example a lack of desire, opportunity, support, or rewards for changing behavior, are the most common factors which can cause the failure of training.

Bashrum (2012) identifies three typical reasons, whose combination can cause the failure of training and so lead to negative ROI: (1) the content is not relevant for the audience; (2) the content is not delivered properly; (3) adoption of the content is not supported by the organization. He emphasizes the support of the organization, especially the supervisor's involvement and post support, which has been found to be critical to adoption of the training content. His study presents a very strong correlation between job support and business impact, which means the impact on the business increases with better support. At a most basic level, job support means that the learner have support from their managers and suitable resources and opportunities to apply the training. (Bashrum 2012.)

Keenan (2000) support Bashrum's view of the importance of the supervisor's involvement. He gives an example from Motorola, where sales managers were involved in supporting individual salespersons during and after the training and were coached on how to ask questions, review and monitor the work of the salespeople to ensure that the training skills were utilized. Moreover, Brinkerhoff's research (2005) shows that in almost every non-successful training case a lack of managerial support was observed. Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick (2006: 42) found that a common cause for a lack of change in behavior after training may be a preventive or discouraging atmosphere.

Kirkpatrick et al. (2006: 23-24) listed four necessary conditions which are crucial for the emergence of behavioral change. First, the learner needs to have a desire to change, secondly they need to know what to do and how to do it. Thirdly they need to work in the right climate and fourthly be rewarded for changing. Teaching the necessary knowledge and skills and creating a positive attitude toward the preferred change assist in accomplishing the first two requirements. The right climate refers to the participant's supervisor and his/her support and attitude toward the training program. Five different kinds of climate have been described, and these are shown in Table 3. The fourth requirement concerns rewards from training. The rewards may be intrinsic, for example, feelings of pride or satisfaction, or extrinsic, for example, recognition by others, praise from a boss or monetary reward (Kirkpatrick et al. 2006: 23-24).

Table 3. Five different kinds of working climates (Kirkpatrick et al. 2006: 23-24).

Preventive	The supervisor prevents the participants acting as the training program has taught them to do. This could be because the supervisor's leadership style conflicts with what the training has taught, or the supervisor may be influenced by the organizational culture from the top management.
Discouraging	The supervisor does not directly prevent the participant from doing something, but he or she makes it clear that it is not desirable that the participant changes his or her behavior according to the training.
Neutral	The supervisor brushes aside the participant's attendance of the training program. She/he has nothing against the change as long as the job gets done. If the participant's behavioral change causes negative results, then the supervisor may create a preventive or discouraging climate.
Encouraging	The supervisor encourages the participant to learn, is interested to know what the participant has learned and wants to help the participant to transfer the learning to the job.
Requiring	The supervisor knows the content of the training and makes sure it is transferred to the job. Sometimes a learning contract is used and prepared at the end of the training session. It states what the subordinate agrees to do and a copy of it may be given to the boss.

If the climate is preventive or discouraging, the chance that the training will transfer to job behavior is obviously slight. In a neutral climate, the change depends more on the three other circumstances. In an encouraging or required climate, the expanse of the behavioral change depends on the first and second conditions. (Kirkpatrick et al. 2006: 24.)

Baldowin and Ford (1988) also illustrated that the individual characteristics (such as ability, motivation, and personality), the training design (training content, sequence and principles of learning) or the working environment (support and opportunity to use learned skills) can affect the lack of change in behavior. Holton (1996) suggest linking the interventions to the organizational mission, strategy, and goals because otherwise, they are unlikely to produce results that are valued by the organization. He also suggests forecasting the financial benefits before the training begins, as usually seeing the potential value will motivate the individuals.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Kothari (2004: 8) describes research methodology as a systematic way to solve a research problem, which can be also understood as "a science of studying how research is done scientifically". Research methodology has many dimensions. It concerns the research methods but also explains the reasons why these particular methods or techniques were chosen and the logic behind the used methods in the context of the research study. This provides a chance for the evaluation of the research results either by the researcher or by others. (Kothari 2004: 8.) The main purpose of research is to answer research questions by applying scientific procedures, which makes choosing the right methodology one of the most important phases of the study (Kothari 2004: 2).

In this chapter, the methodological choices for the study are discussed. First, the chosen research strategy and the reasoning behind the decision are presented, followed by the used data collection methods and the sample. Additionally, the reliability and validity of this research are discussed. Finally, the research process is explained step by step, following Brinkerhoff's (2003) Success Case Method.

3.1 Case study as a research strategy

This research was conducted using a case study as a research strategy. Even though a case study is often defined as a method (Laine, Bamberg & Jokinen 2007: 9), in principle, it is not a research method but rather a strategy or approach, due to its multiple dimensions (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2016: 132; Eriksson & Koistinen 2014: 4), which can vary from a holistic single-unit of analysis to embedded multiple units of analyses and from a single-case design to a multiple-case design (Yin 2009: 50).

Case study research is often the preferred approach when the research question begins with question words such as "how", "what" or "why" (Yin 2009: 10). Moreover, the focus is usually on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context and the researcher

does not have control over events (Yin 2009: 2). A case study seeks different sources of evidence in single or a multiple cases, setting out to answer the research question in the best possible way and its aim is to define, analyze and create a solution for the case study subjects (Gillham 2010: 2). Moreover, a two-phased approach, first defining and then solving the case, is a central feature of the case study (Eriksson et al. 2016: 131).

Case study research is often classified as a qualitative study, but it can also be a quantitative study or a mixture of both (Eriksson et al. 2014: 2; Eriksson et al. 2016: 132). Moreover, case studies can utilize the parallel or sequential use of qualitative and quantitative methods, which is a characteristic of mixed-methods approaches when analyzing empirical data gathered via various collection techniques (Eriksson et al. 2014: 8). Gillham (2010: 2) states that the use of multiple sources of evidence and not having a clear theoretical notion at the start of the research are characteristics of case study research. As a result of the use of multiple sources of data and methods of analysis, a case study can have a close relationship to a mixed-methods approach. (Eriksson et al. 2014: 2.)

A case study was selected for this research strategy, firstly, because of the nature of the research question and the objectives. The research question of the study starts with “what”, similarly the research objectives include “how” and “what” questions. Secondly, this study explores a phenomenon, for example, event, individual or group, that depends on time, place or some other criteria, which is a typical characteristic for a case study (Eriksson et al. 2014: 4-5). Moreover, in this study, the researcher does not have control over events (Yin 2009: 2) and the study aims to determine the current situation of a phenomenon and to gain new insights into it (Saunder, Lewis & Thornhill 2016: 185), which makes the case study the preferred approach. Furthermore, a mixed-methods approach is utilized for data collection.

3.2 Data collection and sample

This sub-chapter presents the sampling and methods used for data collection in this study. Yin (2009: 114) recommend obtaining evidence from multiple sources when conducting a case study. As mentioned earlier, the case study has a close relationship to a mixed-methods approach and mixed-methods can be utilized as a part of it (Eriksson 2014: 10). In this research, a mixed-methods approach is utilized for the data collection, as both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were used.

Mixed-methods is a commonly used approach in educational research, as researchers believe that a combination of two data types results in a more complete understanding of educational problems (Lodico et al. 2006: 17). A research method can be simply described as a technique for collecting data (Bryman & Bell 2007: 49). Its strength is the ability to use both quantitative and qualitative methods combined to answer the research question, which provides an in-depth look at the processes, context, and interactions with accurate measurements of outcomes and attitudes. Mixed-methods research provides flexibility in choosing methods of data collection, and the presentation of results including both numbers and in-depth portraits can be convincing and powerful. (Lodico et al. 2006: 282.)

As both a quantitative and qualitative approach is utilized in this study, also two different data collection processes, a self-completion questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews are used in this study. This study utilizes a sequential explanatory design**,** which means that the data was collected in two phases; the quantitative data was collected first, and the qualitative data collected at a later time (Saunders et al. 2012: 171). One reason for using of an explanatory design is to examine outlier scores or extreme cases in more depth (Lodico et al. 2006: 284).

3.2.1 Limitations

Even though a success case study can investigate the success of the whole program, in many cases, it is more practical or realistic to delimit the sampling to some subset of the

participants. The restriction could be made, for example, according to a certain time frame, specific geographical area or it could focus on only certain categories of employees. Sometimes the limitation can require the construction of a scientifically determined sample, such as a stratified or random sample. (Brinkerhoff 2003: 31, 59.)

Bashrum (2012) highlight the importance of the right time frame. He states that since students tend to be outspoken when they have to deal with misaligned material or bad instruction, the course evaluations should point out these deficiencies pretty quickly. Moreover, Keenan (2000) established the importance of integrating training with work results and measuring the training results as close to the training event as possible. The evaluation cannot be made after too long a time period after the training. Evaluation more than one year after the training is rarely sampled because people are likely to forget what tools they used, what they did and even if they participated or not and otherwise become confused with other training, interventions, and experiences. On the other hand, there is also some period of time that is needed to wait after the training until any impact can be expected. (Brinkerhoff 2003: 60-61.) Altogether, choosing the right time frame is crucial for the research.

This research was limited to five ESM program groups of nine implemented courses. All the chosen groups participated in training which was completed approximately within one year. Pilot program groups were excluded because they had already finished two years prior to the study, so the time frame would have been too long. The three first implemented program groups were delimited because they were pilots groups and the time frame between the training and the evaluation would be too long. One program group held in Japan in Japanese was bounded out because of the language barrier. Moreover, all the other program groups were held in English, so they were more easily comparable. The last program group was held in the US, but a hurricane hit the area and the training program needed to interrupted.

3.2.2 Questionnaire

In the first data collection phase, the quantitative data for the research was gathered through an online survey using Microsoft SharePoint. This was carried out by sending a link to a self-administered questionnaire to the respondents via email. Saunders et al. (2012: 727) describe self-completion questionnaires, often also called "self-administered" questionnaires, as a "data collection technique in which each respondent reads and answers the same set of questions in a predetermined order without an interviewer being presented". A self-completion questionnaire was chosen because the sample was geographically widely dispersed. Other advantages of the self-completion questionnaire are the absence of the interviewer effect, its convenience for respondents and lack of interviewer variability. (Bryman et al. 2007: 240.)

These chosen groups are presented in Table 4. Program groups were held in Australia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and Malaysia and each group had completed the training within the space of one year. All 73 participants were contacted by email and asked to complete a survey within two weeks, followed by two reminder emails. The first reminder was sent a week later to remind the participants to complete the survey. This reminder was sent personally to each participant including the respondent's name, as personalizing the cover letter is one way to improve the response rate (Bryman et al. 2007: 243). Because of the low response rate on the original due date, a second reminder was sent, and the response time was extended by one week. The cover letter and the questionnaire are presented in the appendices at the end of the study.

Table 4. Sample program groups and participants.

Group	Time	Trainer	Number of participants
AU01	04/2017-09/2018	T01	14
MY01	08/2017-01/2018	T01	16
MY02	10/2017-03/2018	T01	14
TR01	04/2018-10/2018	T02	16
UK01	06/2018-01/2019	T03	13
Total			73

3.2.3 Interviews

The sample for the interviews was selected based on the questionnaire results, aiming to choose the most successful and unsuccessful cases. This sampling technique, focusing on unusual or specific cases, is known as extreme case sampling, and is a non-probability, purposive sampling technique (Saunders et al. 2016: 301). In this research, the most successful and unsuccessful participants were selected for interviews, based on their questionnaire results. Some of the participants did not answer the interview requests in spite of many requests, so the next successful or unsuccessful participants were invited to the interviews instead.

Due to their flexibility, a semi-structured interview was applied as a data collection method. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has some predefined key questions and themes to be covered, but the sequence of the questions can vary and also topics that arise during an interview outside the predefined themes can be discussed (Bryman et al. 2015: 213; Saunders et al. 2016: 391). The interviewees' use of words or ideas in a particular way can lead the discussion into themes which are not defined beforehand but can be significant for understanding the phenomenon. The opportunity to "probe" answers is a characteristic feature of semi-structured interviews. (Saunders et al. 2016: 394.) In this research, the interviews followed a list of predetermined questions and sub-questions, but at some times some unplanned clarifying questions were asked. Moreover, the interviewees were able to comment on themes and issues outside the prepared themes

depending on the flow of the interview. The form of the interview structure is presented in the appendices at the end of the study.

A total of 16 of the most successful or unsuccessful participants were contacted and invited to participate in the interview. Unfortunately, not all of them answered the invitation in spite of numerous email requests. Finally, 10 participants were reached. Two of them were so busy that they were not able to give an interview but answered the questions by writing instead. The interviews were conducted over Skype in English and audio recorded. Later all the recordings were transformed into written form. All the interviewees were notified of the research purpose and the questions beforehand. The reserved time for all the interviews was 40 minutes, but the actual duration of interviews varied between 15 and 41 minutes. To ensure the confidentiality and commitment of participants, their answers were anonymous and analyzed by encoding as in Table 7. The table represents the key properties of participants including name code, job title, program group, interview details and points from the questionnaire.

3.3 Reliability and validity

For determining the quality of research, reliability and validity have been traditionally used as criteria. The third aspect that can be used in measuring the quality of case study research is constructed validity, which involves whether the measurements reflect the phenomena they are supposed to (Stuart, McCutcheon, Handfield, McLachlin & Samson 2002). In case of study researches, the traditional reliability and validity assessments are not the accurate ways to measure the reliability, because people and culture, which are typical subjects in case studies, are unique and there are no similar cases. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 232.).

Reliability of research means that the research is repeatable and able to provide non-random results (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 231). Eriksson et al. (2014:305) describe that “the question of reliability is related to the establishment of a degree of consistency in research

in the sense that another researcher can replicate your study and come up with similar findings". Reliability of the qualitative research can be increased by giving a precise and reliable description of circumstances and all the phases of the study. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 233.) To ensure the reliability of this research, each step of the research process is explained as precise as possible.

The validity of the research can be defined as whether the research truly measures or studies the factors that were intended to be studied and the research results are truthful. For example, meters and methods don't always respond to the researcher's visions and respondents can understand the question in a different way as the researcher has meant. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 231). External validity, which refers to a degree to which findings can be generalized, often that represents a problem in qualitative researches, because of they often use case studies and the size of the sample is typically small (Bryman et al. 400). In this research, questions on the questionnaire have been designed related to the theory of the study and the questions are presented as unambiguous as possible so that the respondents can understand the question in the same way as the researcher has meant. A lot of time was spent on preliminary planning of the research, and the survey was reviewed by stakeholders for approval. In addition, all the semi-structured interviews are documented in voice-recordings and transcript versions.

In this research, triangulation has used to increase validity, as multiple data sources are used. Triangulation involves the use of more than one methodologies, methods, theory, researchers or source of data to ensure that the data in the study data is defining what it is meant to. The researcher can use either one or many forms of triangulation together. (Bryman et al. 402; Eriksson 2016: 306). Moreover, Eriksson et al (2016: 306) define triangulation as a process of using multiple perspectives to refine and clarify the findings of the research.

3.4 Description of the research process

This section introduces the research process step by step. This research was conducted by using the Success Case Method (SCM). SCM has five major steps to be followed in planning and conducting the study. Five key steps in SCM are presented in Figure 3. This section presents the research process by following these five major steps of the Success Case Method.

Figure 3. Five key steps in SCM (Brinkerhoff 2003: 29).

Step 1: Focusing and planning a success case study

The objective of the first step is to understand and clarify what the study needs to achieve and ensure that all the necessary parts of the study are planned so that the study can provide stakeholders with the information they need and expect. This step has several considerations and decisions that must be made to plan a useful and efficient success case study. Its goal is to define the purpose of the study, as well as limitations and resources. Based on this, the design for this study is presented in Table 5. The design of the study accomplishes the key purpose of the study using the identified resources and within other constraints. (Brinkerhoff 2003: 29, 48)

The general purpose of an SC study is to determine how well a program is working, but a deeper understanding and definition of the other purposes helps to frame and shape the study better. It also helps to understand why the SC method is the best evaluation model for that specific purpose. (Brinkerhoff 2003: 49.) In this study, the research questions and

the purposes of this study are discussed in the first chapter of this research. Because the SC method focuses on a small number of learners instead of the average scores, it is not the right approach for the studies where central tendency means, averages or precise information about everyone is needed. Conversely, SCM has effectively been used to address program benefits, opportunities to improve the training and estimating the ROI, which have been listed as a part of the key objectives this study (Brinkerhoff 2003: 50). This supports the use of SCM as a training evaluation model in this research.

Table 5. Success case method design.

The program	The SCM intent	The design
ABB's internal Effective Sales Management program	1. Estimating the benefits that the company has achieved with the program 2. Find out how the program could be improved 3. Identify the key factors behind success/nonsuccess 4. Document success stories, which can be used to market the training program	- Choose which program groups will be included in the survey - Send an email survey to all training participants in chosen groups - Identify the most successful and unsuccessful participants - Conduct interviews via Skype to explore, verify and document success - Evaluate the benefits of the program - Identify the key factors behind success /unsuccess - Analyze what changes should be made to improve the program

Step 2: Creating an impact model that defines success

The second step of SCM is creating an impact model to define success. Brinkerhoff (2002: 75) identify the impact model as a description of what a successful performance would look like if the training is accomplished as the stakeholders hope it should. It serves as the basis for the survey and the interview questions. Because the aim of the survey is to discover those participants who report the greatest and the lowest success, it is crucial to define what the study is looking for. (Brinkerhoff 2002: 76.) The impact model for the ESM program is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Impact model for the ESM program.

Key knowledge and skills	Critical actions	Results	Goals
Sales strategy "Go-to" market strategy Account management Opportunity management Sales effectiveness Customer focus Team leadership Coaching Team development	Use available processes and tools effectively Drive sales productivity and individual effectiveness Make a development plan for the sales team Give feedback Coach individuals Lead the team in daily activities	Well-defined sales targets Effective sales processes Superior customer satisfaction Strengthen role as sales manager in driving profitable growth	Drive the sales transformation within sales teams Increase market share Increase sales volume Hit-rate

Step 3: Designing and implementing a survey to search for the best and worst cases

The third step in SCM is to search for and identify success and non-success cases, and the most common way to do this is to carry out a survey. The aim of the survey is to identify the potential success cases where the participants have applied the knowledge and skills developed in the training and unsuccessful cases where they have not. This sorting can be done also using other non-survey methods, such as by looking at performance data, usage records, and reports, or simply using "word of mouth" and reputation. However, in addition to finding extreme results, the survey can provide further quantitative information about the nature and scope of the success of the program and for this reason, it can be seen as a most informative and useful method. (Brinkerhoff 2003: 98-99.)

There are two types of success case surveys. The first type is a single-purpose survey, and this has a limited and narrow function. It aims only to sort out those participants who report the highest and the lowest success within a specific training program and has typically no more than five to seven questions. Because this type of survey is very brief, it is more likely to lead to high response rates. (Brinkerhoff 2003: 101-105.) Moreover,

in self-completion questionnaires, shorter questionnaires typically achieve better response rates than the longer ones (Bryman et al. 2007: 240). Additionally, using as few open questions as possible is a further way to improve the response rate (Bryman et al. 2007: 243).

The second type of survey is a multipurpose survey. This provides a deeper and more diverse range of information on the participants. In addition to the single-purpose survey, it can contain questions to identify which participants were involved in the program as volunteers or determine which support factors enhanced or inhibited their success. Designing the survey also includes devising a scoring scheme, which allows the selection of the potential success and nonsuccess cases for the interview (Brinkerhoff 2003: 107).

In this research, a multipurpose survey was conducted and all the participants were contacted by email and asked to complete the survey. The survey was sent to the participants via ABB's Head of Training Management. Using an executive sponsor of the survey highlighted the importance of responding and this is one strategy to promote a decent response rate (Brinkerhoff 2006: 99). As the aim was to collect as many responses as possible, the questionnaire was kept short and it included only multiple choice questions.

Step 4: Interviewing and documenting success cases

Usually, the fourth step is the most time consuming, but also produces the most and richest information (Brinkerhoff 2003:38). After analyzing the results of the survey, the most successful and unsuccessful participants are chosen and interviewed. There are different methods for using survey scores to select interview candidates, depending on the overall purpose of the study. Because in this study the purpose was to illustrate the impact of the program and explore factors that seemed to support or inhibit the success, a sample of the highest and the lowest scores was used. The interview structure is presented in the appendices.

Step 5: Communicating the findings, conclusions, and recommendations

The fifth and final step is deducting and analyzing the results and the factors which support or inhibit the success of the training. Usually, this phase also includes recommendations for improvement. Yin (2003) has argued that analyzing the case study is the most difficult part, as case studies are often criticized as being merely a collection of stories. Therefore, it is crucial to pre-plan the analysis methods, which helps with planning and carrying out the research (Stuart et al. 2002). SPSS software was used to analyze the answers from the survey. The answers given in the survey and semi-structured interviews are analyzed in the next chapter.

4 RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the research will be discussed. First, the main characteristics of the data collected by the survey are presented, after which the observations from the interviews are described. After that, the key findings are summarized by answering the research questions. Finally, the limitations of the study and a discussion about future research are presented.

4.1 Findings from the survey

Next, the results of the survey are presented. The survey contained three sections, each with its own purpose: (1) background information, (2) training reactions and (3) results of the training. The response rate was 60.2 percent as 41 participants answered the questionnaire, as presented in Table 7. Five participants had left ABB, so they were excluded. The used questionnaire form is presented in the appendices.

Table 7. Program groups and responses

Group	Time	Number of participants	Number of answers	Response rate (%)
AU01	04/2017-09/2018	12 (+2 who left ABB)	7	58.3
MY01	08/2017-01/2018	13 (+3 who left ABB)	8	61.5
MY02	10/2017-03/2018	14	10	71.4
TR01	04/2018-10/2018	16	9	56.3
UK01	06/2018-01/2019	13	7	53.8
Total		68	41	60.2

4.1.1 Background information

The first section of the questionnaire collected the background information of participants. The survey was conducted as a SharePoint survey in the company's database, so there was no need for the survey to include the name or e-mail address because that identification information was automatically available in SharePoint. The respondents' experience in sales management positions varied from zero to 16 years, and the average was 6 years. The respondents were divided into three groups according to their experience: under five years' experience, from 5 to 9 years' experience and respondents with ten or more years' experience. The distribution is visualized in the chart in Figure 4, which shows that most of the respondents had under five years' experience in sales management positions.

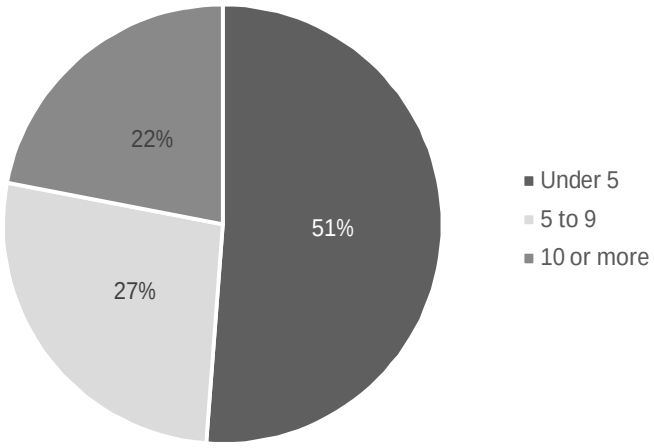

Figure 4. The distribution of experience in years in a sales management position.

The most common role was sales manager, but the answers varied widely, including sales managers widely from different levels and functions (i.e. service sales managers, region sales managers, sales and marketing managers), but also nonspecific answers ("Sales", "EPC sales"), and roles outside the actual target group ("Local product group manager", "sales specialist").

4.1.2 Training reactions

The second section evaluates the participants' reactions to the training, which can be seen as level 1 of Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model. As typical for level 1, this section measures the participants' satisfaction with the training content, instructor, training materials, and training methods, but also the supervisor's support. It included questions about the training experience itself and factors which according to the literature review can lead to the success or failure of the training.

All these questions, excluding questions on the net promoter score and the senior manager's support, were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale and the averages of those answers are presented in Table 8. As can be seen, the average of TR01 was lower than the average in any other group for every question. The MY01, MY02 and AU01 program groups had averages above grade four for all the other questions except "How well your daily work allowed to spend time for learning?" This question evaluates job support, which can also affect the failure or success of the training. It includes managerial support but also relates whether the participant has suitable resources and opportunities to apply the training. (Bashrum 2012.) In this survey, that question got the noticeably lowest rating in every program group and had the lowest overall average, only 3.2.

Table 8. Training reactions

	AU01	MY01	MY02	TR01	UK01	Total
How well was the whole training program organized?	4	4.1	4.4	3.1	3.9	3.9
How well was the content of the program delivered?	4.1	4.3	4.3	3.2	3.42	3.9
How well did the training content met your needs?	4	4.3	4.3	2.7	3.9	3.8
How well did the trainer enable your learning and success with your development project?	4.1	4.4	4.3	2.7	3.3	3.8
How well did your daily work allow you to spend time learning during this program?	3	3.6	3.8	2.7	2.6	3.2
Relevancy of the training topics	4.4	4.1	4.0	3.1	3.9	3.9

The senior manager's support was evaluated by asking "What was your supervisor's support and attitude toward the training program?" The response options varied from preventive to requiring, as per the five working climates stated by Kirkpatrick et al. (2006: 23), which were presented earlier in Table 3. The results are presented in figure 5, which shows the difference between the program groups. In UK01, all the respondents rated their senior manager's requiring or encouraging, while all the other groups also included the answers "neutral" and in TR01 even "discouraging". In total, 2% rated their senior manager as discouraging, 15% neutral, 63% encouraging and 20% requiring.

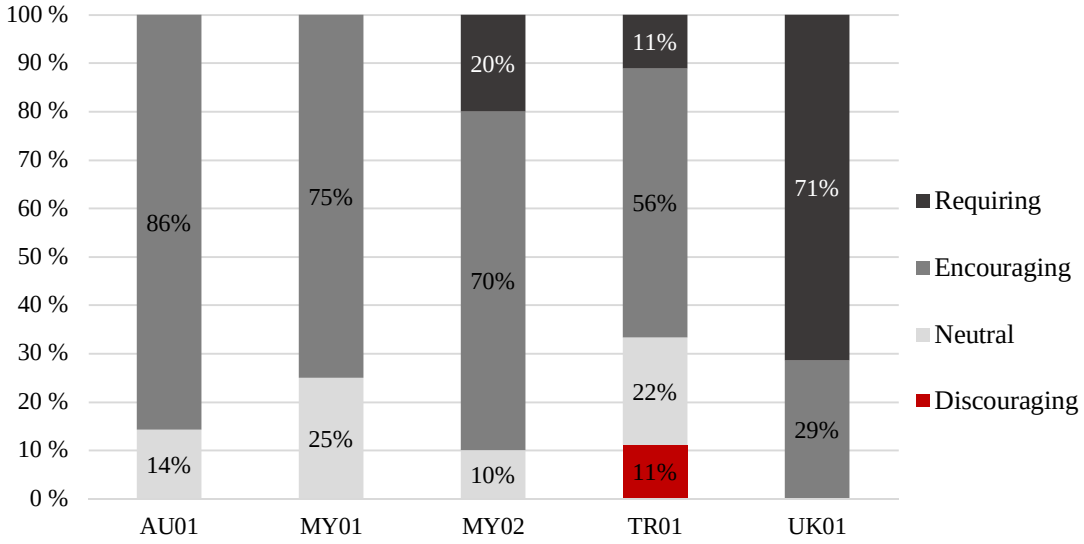

Figure 5. Senior managers' support by program groups.

The content of the training was the same for all the program groups, but the responses varied greatly between the groups to the question "How relevant were the topics covered in the program for your job?" The average of the answers was 3.9, but as can be noticed from figure 7, the TR01 participants rated the training topics as significantly less relevant than the other program groups. The average of their answers was 3.1, whereas the average of AU01 was 4.4, as presented in Figure 6.

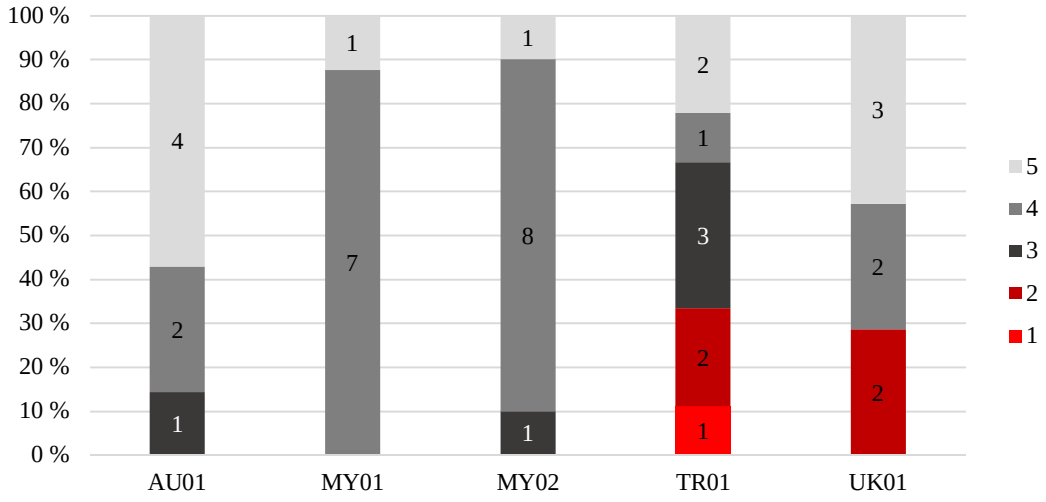

Figure 6. Relevancy of the training topics by the program groups.

The relevancy of the topics linked to the experience of the groups is presented in Figure 7. Interestingly, the most experienced participants rated the content to be the most relevant (4.11), and everyone else except the participants from TR01 answered with a grade 4 or 5. In contrast, the participants with five to nine years of experience gave the lowest average (3.5), whereas the sales managers with under five years of experience gave an average of 3.9. That suggests that the trainer has a crucial impact on the content of the training, as a good trainer is able to make the content relevant also for the more experienced participants, for example, with his/her own knowledge and real-life examples.

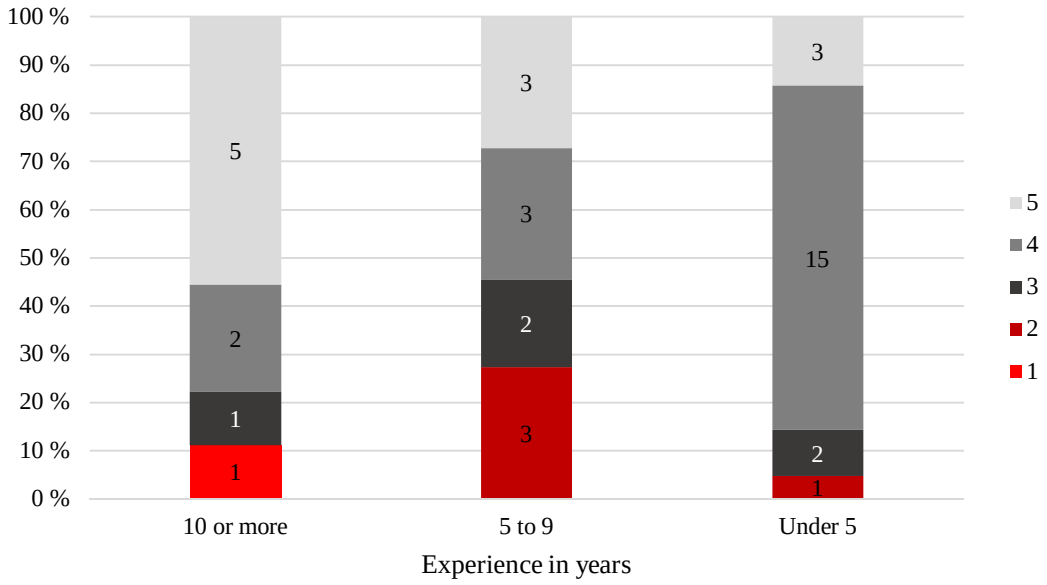

Figure 7. Relevancy of the training topics according to the years of experience of the participants.

There were three different trainers, as presented in table 9. T01 was the only one who had any experience at ABB, as he used to work as an internal sales trainer in ABB. He was a trainer for three program groups: AU01, MY01, and MY02. T02 and T03 were both from the same external sales consultant company and they did not have any earlier ABB experience.

Table 9. Trainers.

Trainer	T01	T02	T03
Program groups	AU01, MY01, MY02	TR01	UK01
Internal/ external	External trainer	External trainer	External trainer
ABB Experience	Yes, used to work for years as an internal sales trainer	No	No

Figure 8 shows an obvious difference between the trainers, as T01 was rated to be considerably better than the other trainers. Everyone else except one participant from his three program groups rated him with a grade 4 or 5, whereas only one participant rated T02 better than with a grade 3.

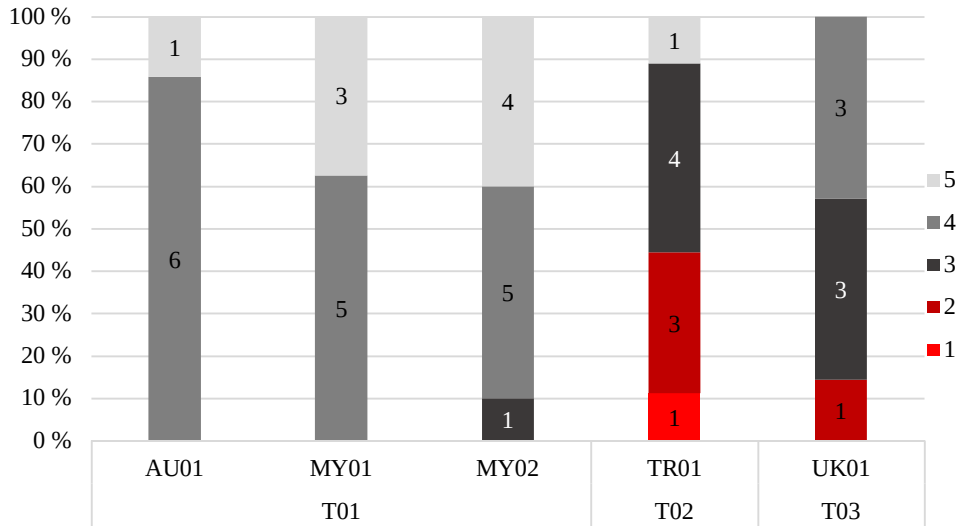

Figure 8. Trainer rating by the program groups.

Moreover, the rating of the trainer linked to the years of experience of the groups is presented in Figure 9. It shows that all the most experienced participants except the participants from the TR01 program group were satisfied with the trainer, whereas the participants from the TR01 group were not satisfied at all. In other experience classes,

some participants from TR01 rated their trainer a bit higher, but the trainer still had low ratings (grade 1 or 2) in each experience group.

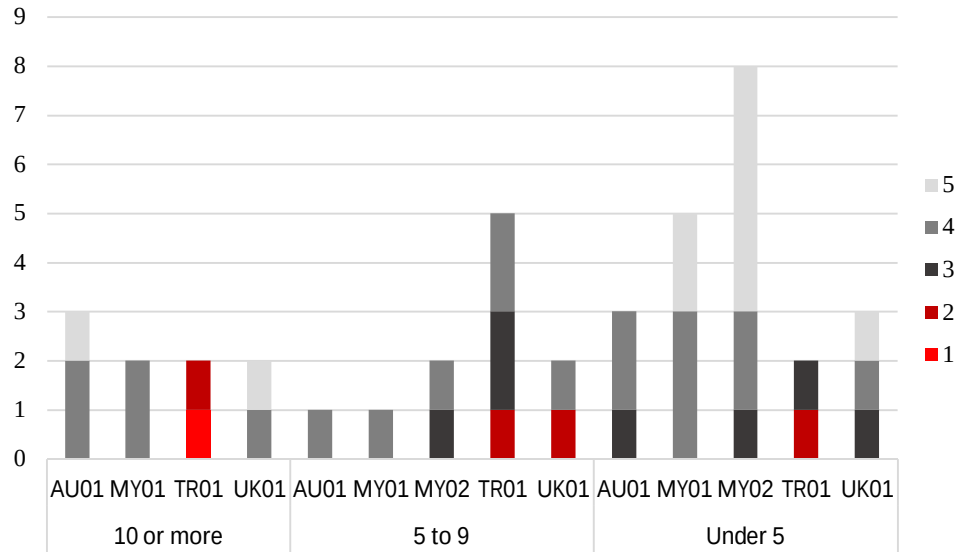

Figure 9. Trainer ratings according to the years of experience of the participants.

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a frequently used metric in ABB. The NPS was introduced by Fred Reichheld in 2003 and is used in business to measure the customers' willingness to recommend the product, service, or enterprise to their colleagues or friends. NPS is derived from survey responses to a likelihood to recommend question on a 0-10 scale. From the responses groups are formed. The first group, promoters, show the highest satisfaction by a rating of 9 or 10. The second group, the so-called passives, consist of customers who are somewhat satisfied and answer the question with a rating of 7 or 8. The proportion of the most unsatisfied respondents by a rating of 6 or less are referred to as detractors. The NPS was evaluated with the question "How likely are you to recommend this training to your colleagues?" The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. NPS results

Group	Number of answers	Percent
Promoters (9-10)	14	34.1%
Passives (7-8)	15	36.6%
Detractors (1-6)	12	29.3%

The NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters, and the difference represents the NPS, as presented in Figure 10. The NPS score can range from a low of −100 or as high as +100. (Reichheld 2003; Jastania et al. 2017.)

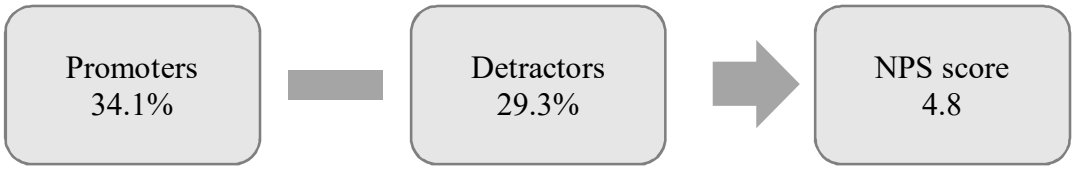

Figure 10. NPS calculation.

The NPS results are divided into groups and are presented in Table 9, which shows that the distribution between the groups was quite steady. NPS, which was calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters, was low; only 4.8. On the other hand, the average score was 7.3. The distribution of NPS grades is presented in Figure 11. Again, the difference between the groups was significant; only one participant in group TR01 gave a better grade than 7, whereas only one participant from group AU01 gave a worse grade than 8. The averages of the grades in different program groups were 7.9 in AU01, 7.1 in UK01, 5.1 in TR01, 8.2 in MY02 and 8.1 in MY01.

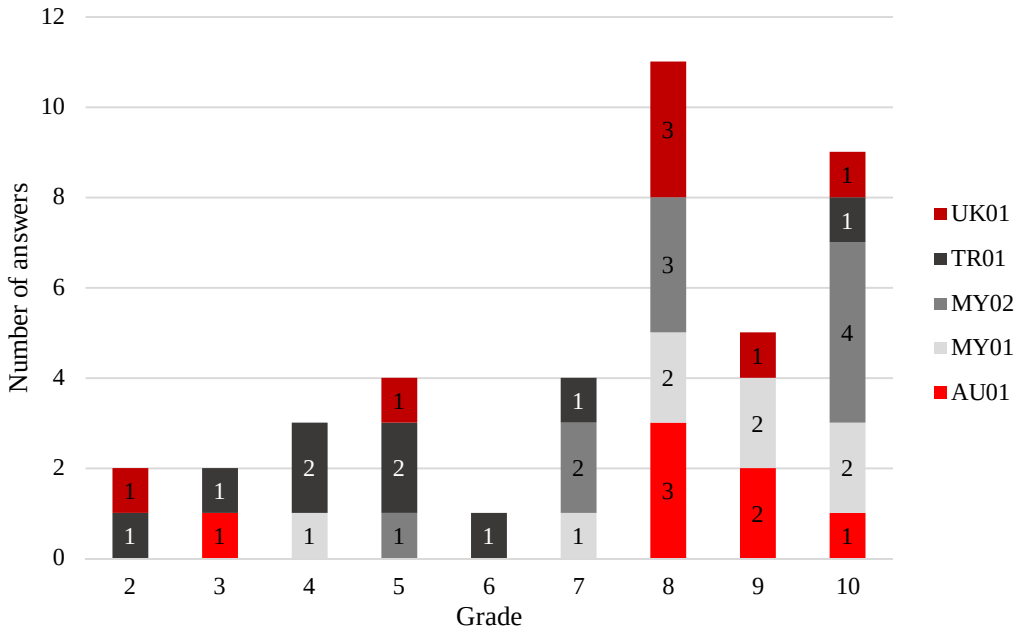

Figure 11. Distribution of NPS grades.

Different training methods were evaluated by asking the respondents "Please rate how much the following parts of the training program added value to your learning." The averages for the different training groups are presented in Table 11. As can be seen, workshops got the highest average, whereas the webinars got the lowest average. Again, TR01 participants rated every factor with a lower average than the other groups, except for e-learning. Actually, e-learning was the only training method where the trainer did not have any impact, as everyone completed the e-learning independently. Moreover, the biggest difference between TR01 and other training groups existed in workshops, where the impact of the trainer is typically the highest.

The results from earlier studies suggest that action-oriented training approaches are both the most effective and also lead to higher trainee satisfaction among sales managers (Dubinsky 2001; Gordon et al. 2012). Interestingly, even the webinars are a more interactive and participative training method than e-learning, and the average grade for e-learning was higher than the average of the webinars in every program group. Therefore, it could be assumed that the webinars have some room for improvement to add more value to the participants' learning.

Table 11. Average ratings of different training methods presented according to the program groups.

Group	AU01	MY01	MY02	TR01	UK01	Total
Project	4	4.3	4.1	3.1	3.7	3.8
Workshops	4.3	4.5	4.3	3.2	4.6	4.1
Webinars	3.6	3.8	3.9	3.1	3.3	3.5
E-learning	3.9	4	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.8

The distribution of the different grades given for the training methods is presented in Figure 12. As can be seen, mostly all the lowest ratings were from the TR01 participants. Workshops received the greatest share of (41 percent) of the grade 5 scores, whereas only 12 percent of participants rated webinars with a grade 5. None of the participants rated any training method with a grade 1, but all the methods got some grade 2 scores.

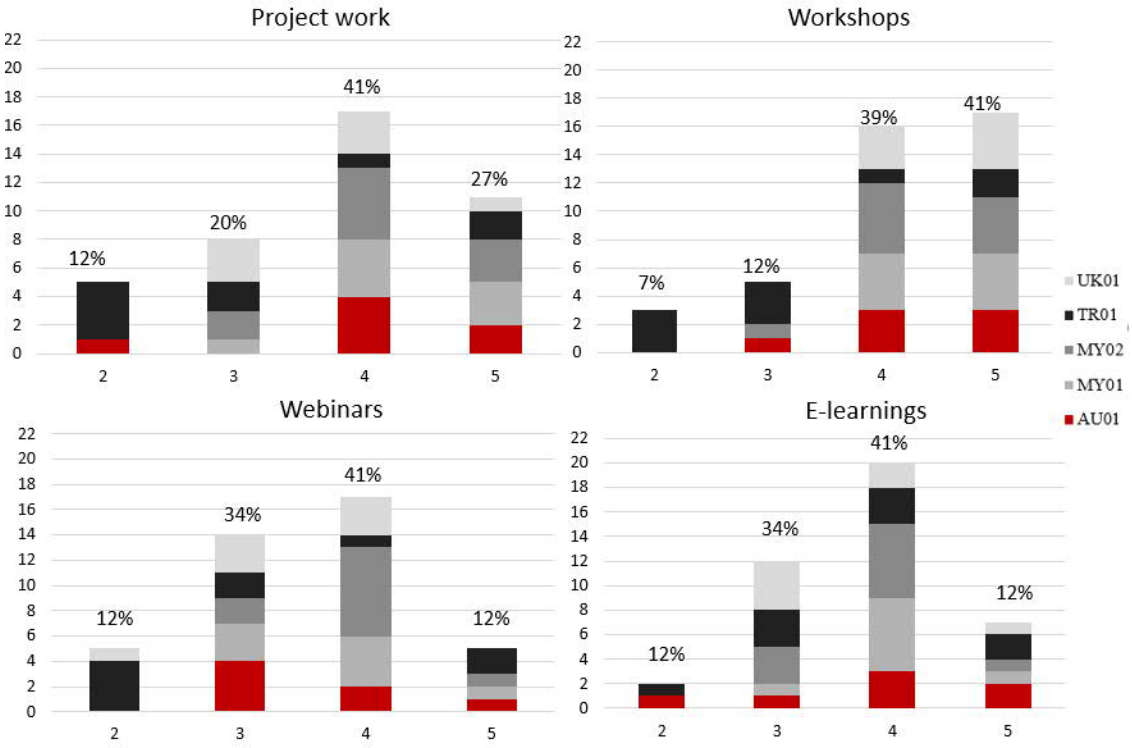

Figure 12. Distribution of grades given by the participants for different training methods.

4.1.3 Results of the training

The function of the third section was to identify the most and the least successful participants in the programs for the interviews, but also to evaluate the results that occurred because the participant attended the program, which is level 4 in Kirkpatrick's evaluation model. To be able to select the potential successful and non-successful candidates, the scoring scheme was devised before sending the questionnaire forms out. All the question were multiple-choice questions with four choices, which were presented from the best choice to the worst possible choice.

All the questions have the same scoring method; 3 points for choice (a), 2 for (b), 1 for (c) and zero for choice (d). In this way, it was possible to calculate the total score from the four questions and rank the participants from the highest score to lowest score. The maximum score was 15 points, which was received by four participants, and the minimum was zero. These results are presented in Figure 13. As can be seen, the lowest score was 2 points and all the lowest scores were from TR01 participants. At the opposite, all AU01 participants got over ten points. Overall, the variance between the results totally and within the different program groups was quite high.

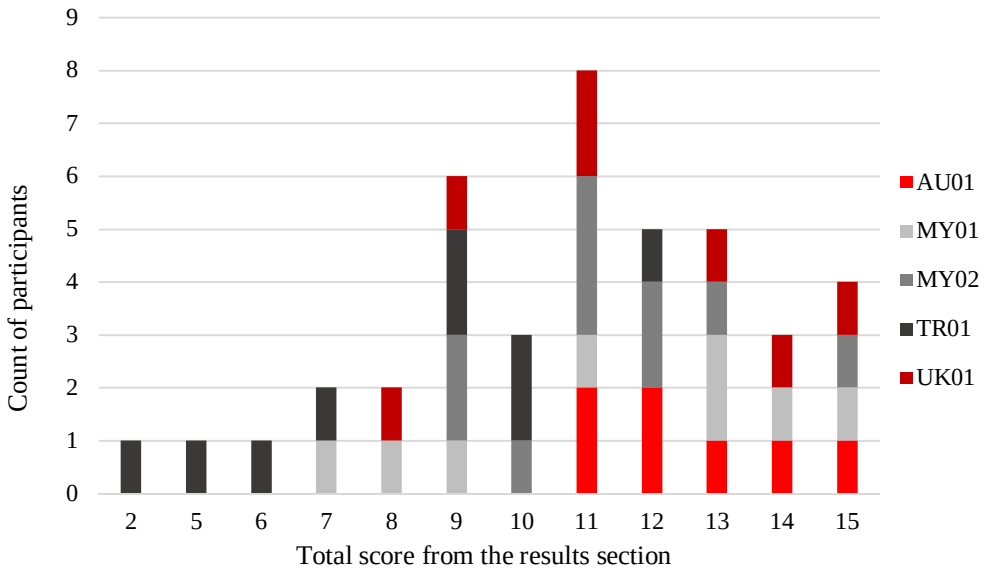

Figure 13. Results from the program for each program group.

An improvement in job productivity was asked with the question, “Did this training improve your job productivity?” The answers are visualized in the chart in Figure 14. Most of the respondents experienced some improvement in their productivity (51%), but some participants, especially from the TR01 program group, reported that they Had not experienced any productivity improvement (24%) or even learned anything that could improve their productivity (2%). 17 percent of the respondents reported that they had experienced a significant improvement in their productivity.

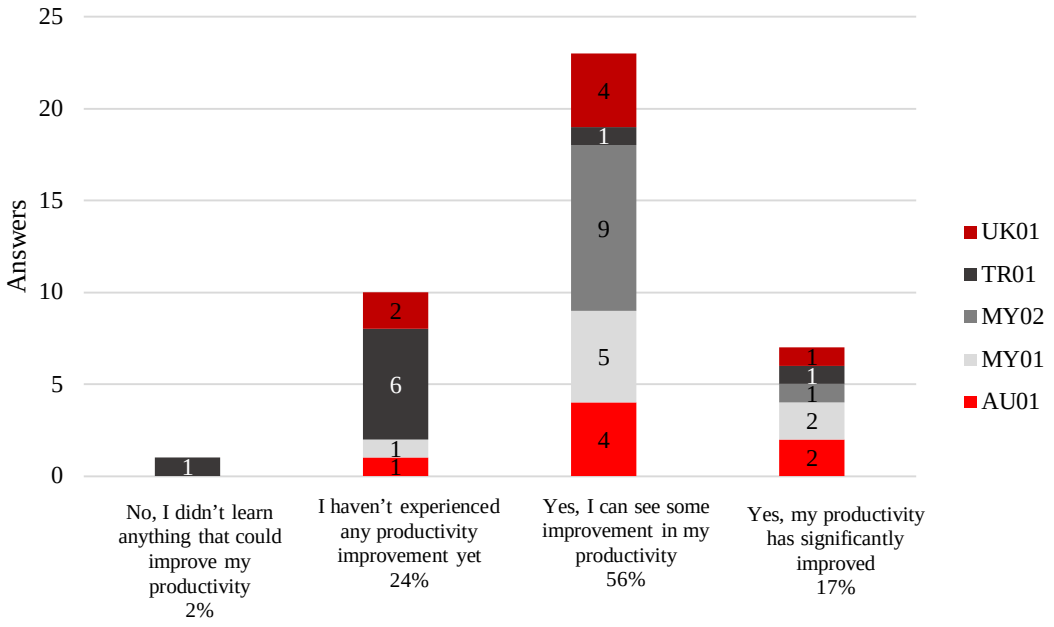

Figure 14. Productivity increase.

The participants’ commitment was evaluated by asking, “Which statement best represents your own commitment to this training program?” The answers are presented in Figure 15. None of the participants answered that they had no commitment at all, although 10 percent of them admitted that they were not as committed to the program as would be needed and 29 percent did not commit their full efforts. On the other hand, 61 percent answered that they were fully committed.

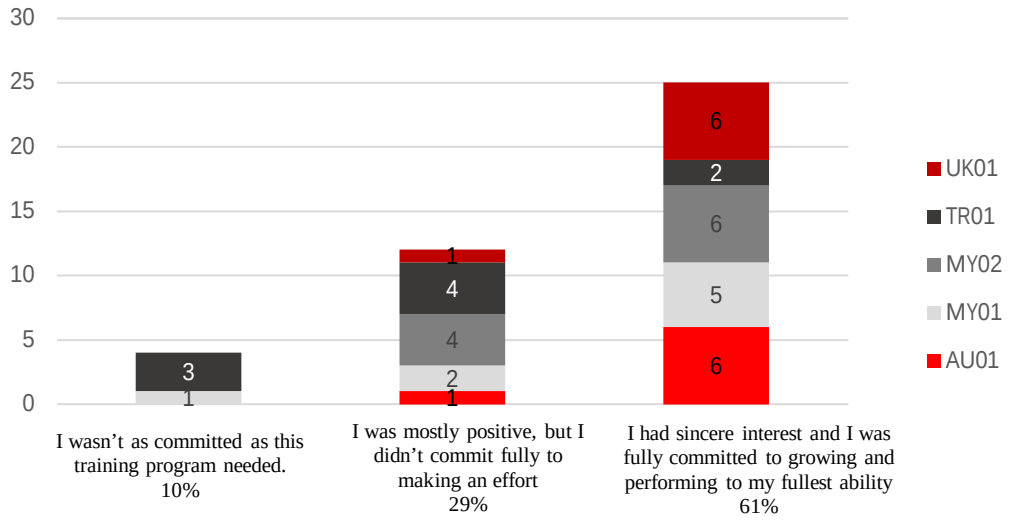

Figure 15. Commitment.

The participants were asked about the training transfer, which relates to the extent to which what is learned in the training is applied on the job (Laker et al. 2011). This was asked with the question, "Have you used the knowledge and skills from this training in your job to improve your own performance and your sales team?" Only respondents from TR01 gave any negative responses; one respondent reported that he had not used any skills or knowledge from the training and had not any plans to do so, and three participants reported that they have not yet used any knowledge or skills but expected to do so, as presented in Figure 16. All the participants from other program groups reported using the tools and learning, either without any remarkable results (46%) or with clearly positive results (44%).

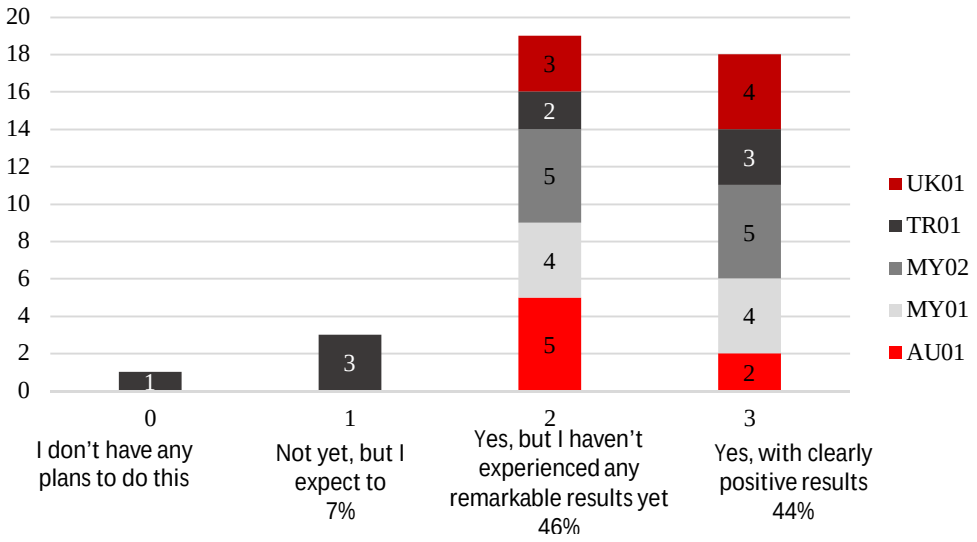

Figure 16. Training transfer

Figure 17 presents participants' answers concerning the results of the project work. Their opinions were determined by asking the question "Which statement best represents the success of your project work?" In this question, the variance of the answers was high in every program group: 43 percent answered that their project was not completed yet, whereas 24 percent had completed the project without any remarkable results and 41 percent had done so with positive results. AU01 was the only group where all the participants had completed their project work. They got the highest average (2.71), while the TR01 average was again the lowest (1.77). The time for the training did not seem to have any effect since UK01 was the most recently finished group and they still had the second-best average (2.14).

Figure 17. The success of the project work.

The ROI of the program was determined by asking the question: "The investment for this training program was about 1,500 USD per participant. How long do you think it will take/took to cover this investment by your and/or your sales team improved productivity?". As was presented in Figure 2, Brinkerhoff (2006: 26-27) describes that the participants' who use their learning and achieve concrete and valuable results from the training, have a positive ROI and the results are typically greater than the cost of training, and the surplus value covers the training cost of the participants with a negative ROI.

In this question, the difference between the program groups was considerable, as shown in Figure 18 below. 34 percent of the respondents reported that the investment was already paid back while 7 percent believed that it was very unlikely to be ever paid back. A notable observation was that no participant from the TR01 program group answered that that the investment was already paid back.

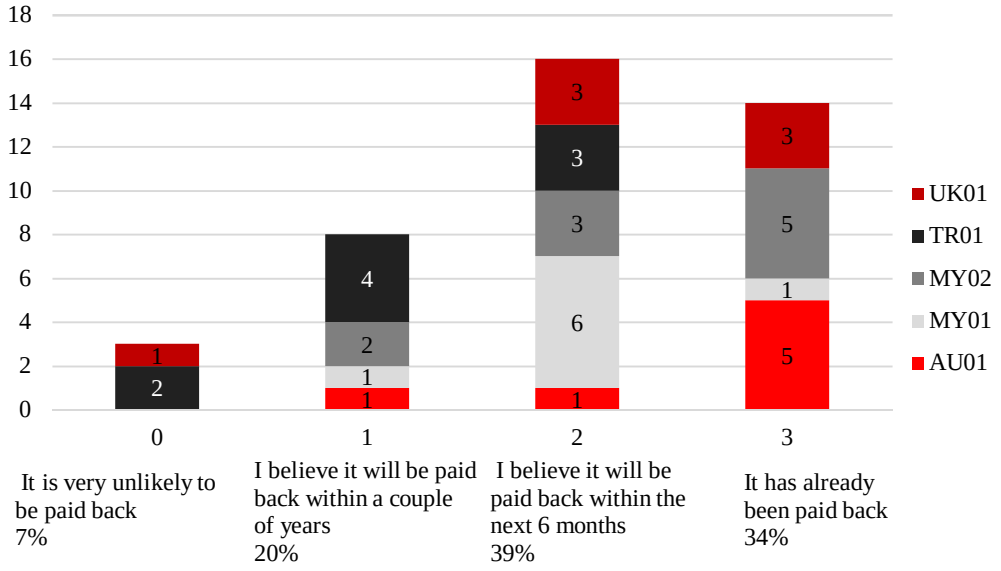

Figure 18. ROI of the training program.

4.1.4 Correlation matrix

In Appendix 4, the correlations between different variables are presented. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (PMCC) was utilized to test the correlations between the different variables. PMCC, which is often known as a Person's r, examines the strength of the relationship between two variables, where the value +1 means a perfect positive correlation, while the value -1 shows that the variables are perfectly independent of each other. If a positive correlation between the variables exists, the one variable decreases or increases in line with the other variable. In contrast, when the variables have a negative correlation, the influence is the opposite and the other variable will change in the opposite direction. (Saunders et al. 2016: 545.)

In the case of the participants experience in years, there exists a statistically significant negative correlation between how well their daily work allowed them to spend time on the learning ($p < 0.05$), how well the training content met their needs ($p < 0.05$), how well they thought that the training program was organized ($p < 0.05$) and most strongly

between trainer. Interestingly, there do not exist any statistically significant positive or negative correlations between the years of experience and the NPS.

The NPS value can be seen to be the most comprehensive meter of the overall reaction to the training. As can be assumed, there exists a statistically significant positive correlation between the NPS and the different training methods ($p < 0.01$), but also with for the different training reactions ($p < 0.01$), even though the correlation with the supervisor is not as statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) as the other factors. The strongest correlation exists between the rating of the trainer and the factor which related how well the content met the participants' needs.

A positive correlation between the NPS and the total result was statistically significant, but surprisingly weak, as the correlation was stronger for the training reactions. On the other hand, this supports earlier studies (e.g. Holton 1996; Sitzmann et al. 2008), which have shown a poor correlation between the reactions of the participants and learning. The overall results from the program have a statistically significant positive correlation ($p < 0.01$) with all the other training reactions, except the senior manager's support and how well the daily work permitted the learning (Q9). Interestingly, there did not seem to be a strong correlation between the results and the training methods.

As described earlier, statistically significant positive correlation ($p < 0.05$) exist between the senior manager's support and NPS, but interestingly, the senior manager's support did not statistically significantly correlate positively or negatively with any other variable. Contrarily, the trainer seemed to be the factor which correlated most strongly with almost all other factors. Concerning the training methods used, the trainers seem to have the strongest correlations with project work and workshops, whereas all the other variables in training reaction section except senior manager had a statistically significant positive correlation ($p < 0.01$) with the trainer. From the results section, statistically significant positive correlation ($p < 0.01$) existed between all the other factors except the results from the project work.

4.2 Findings from the interviews

This section presents the results of the interviews. The interview data consists of a total of 10 responses from the sales managers from five program groups who all had completed the Effective Sales Management program within one year, which was also one criterion set for choosing the participants groups for the research. The interviewees are presented in Table 12. Six of them were “success case participants”, who scored the highest points on the questionnaire, whereas four them were “non-success case participants”, who scored the lowest points on the questionnaire.

In this chapter, the reasons for the interviewees’ participation are discussed first. After that, the results from the success case interviews and non-success case interviews are presented in separate subchapters. The project work and trainer are separated as their own subchapter, as there was so much discussion regarding both of them. Finally, the results of the program, followed by suggestions on how to improve the program, are presented.

Table 12. Interviewees

Inter-viewee	Partici-pant type	Job title	Experience (years)	Program group	Date	Interview length (min)	Points from survey (0-15)
P01	Success case	Service sales manager	1	MY01	09.01.2019	17:15	14
P02	Non-success cases	OEM sales manager	16	TR01	09.01.2019	26:41	2
P03	Success case	Assistant sales manager	2	MY02	10.01.2019	19:06	15
P04	Non-success cases	Sales channel manager	4	TR01	14.01.2019	15:17	7
P05	Non-success cases	Bursa region sales manager	4	TR01	13.01.2019	17:22	5
P06	Success case	Sales manager	10	MY01	17.01.2019	19:07	15
P07	Success case	Sales & marketing manager	6	AU01	26.01.2019	27:57	15
P08	Success case	Sales manager	15	AU01	24.01.2019	Email	13
P09	Success case	Panel builder & OEM Sales manager	3	UK01	01.02.2019	41:17	14
P10	Non-success case	General manager	5	UK01	15.02.2019	Email	8

One interesting observation from the interviews was the inconsistency between the participants' questionnaire results and the interview answers. For example, some non-success case participants might rate all areas of the training extremely low in the questionnaire, but then during the interview, it became clear that they were generally very satisfied with the program, expect for some specific factor (e.g. the trainer). Notwithstanding, they were not able to describe why they had answered the survey questionnaire in that way.

4.2.1 Participation

None of the interviewees had heard anything about the program before participating. In the TR01 program group, all the interviewees said that their HR invited them to participate and their reason to attend was that the training program was mandatory for them. The following excerpt illustrates this point: “There was no discussion before we started to the training whether we should attend or not, it was just that it came to us to the participation in the training actually,” (P02). They also said that they were not able to see the content before the program started and most of them had already participated in many quite similar training programs.

TR01 were different from the other groups as all the participants were from the same division and same country. Many of them had also their managers or subordinates in the same program. Conversely, some other interviewees said that they were only ones from their organizations or countries who participated. They did not think it was a problem, even they agreed that it would have been useful if there had been someone from the same business to discuss their specific customers, channels, and scenarios with.

Additionally, in Australia, the training was mandatory for all sales managers. One participant from AU01 said that after the training there was a sort of qualification process when each participant was interviewed by two senior managers, who decided whether the participant would qualify or not. Another participant described that he was nominated by his manager and HR business partner, and that he identified benefits both in the course content as well as in networking with peers across business units.

The non-success case participant from the UK01 program group said that he did not know exactly who decided that he should participate, and he felt it strange that he was selected as he is not a sales manager. Another participant from UK01 said that he was selected by their HR, who had decided who they would like to send on the course, and he was one of the sales managers selected to go. He describes his reasons to participate as follows:

"I wanted to improve as an individual in terms of how can I be the best possible sales manager […] I have a group of guys that are very competent, very hardworking and very happy to be led by my instruction, so I must ensure that my instruction is good and we're pointing the ship in the right direction." (P09)

MY01 and MY02 participants instead said that they got the information about the program from their senior manager, who suggested them to participate. Some of them said that they were quite new in their role and wanted to learn more, whereas some participants were extremely experienced but still felt they wanted and needed to learn more. The following excerpt from the interview illustrates this aspect:

"I like to know more about the ABB, even I've been in the sales for more than 15 years, and then I read the content is quite interesting […]so even I am quite senior in this role but I still need to learn, so I decided to participate, to get some new information, to get some new ideas." (P06)

4.2.2 Success case participants' reactions

Overall six extremely successful participants from five different program groups were interviewed. All of them thought that the program was excellently organized, and they were aware of the dates, timings, places and other things all the time. The interviewees described that they received a lot of information when they enrolled for the program and the milestones were easy to follow and everybody participated and focused on the training. Moreover, all of them said that they had high levels of motivation and commitment. All of them also described that the content was right for them, even though some participants mentioned that some of the material was less beneficial for them as they were already familiar with the topics from earlier management and sales training. Below is a typical comment from this group concerning the content:

"It was about sales effectiveness and productivity. It was like what should a sales manager really do and then you define that role and then how to achieve that role

in terms of, you know, go to market model, customer segmentation, industry segmentation, pipeline and opportunity measurement, target setting, coaching, all that together - it just covered everything." (P08)

The interviewees opinions on the different training methods varied a lot. Many of the participants described that they did not like web-based learning, but they knew that workshops are too costly and time consuming, so they admitted that it was not possible to do all learning in workshops. The positive aspects of webinars the participants described were the cost-effectiveness and possibility to connect from wherever. On the other hand, the lack of interactivity and networking were described as a negative feature. Some participants said that the webinars were boring because it was not possible to actually talk or collaborate with the other participants. Still many of the participants stated that even though they would have liked more workshops, they believed that they just needed to get used to web-based training as they thought that it would be the main way to deliver training in the future. Some of them would have liked to have more webinars instead of e-learning because the participants felt that they were more engaged and focused when they were studying in a group. Some participants felt that a negative attribute in e-learning was that it was too easy to cheat without really studying the content.

Generally, the interviewees thought that workshops were the best training method and the number or length of the workshops should be increased, as they felt that currently the workshops were too tough because there was too much information and too many topics to discuss. Some participants described that their trainers skipped many slides and topics because they did not have enough time to go through all the slides. On the other hand, the interviewees gave positive feedback on the content of the workshops, discussions and the group works. The biggest benefit of the workshops was stated to be the interactivity and information sharing with salespersons from other countries or businesses, as P06 described:

"We can talk some arguments, we can discuss, change some information, change some knowledge and we can see sales from other countries." (P06)

One participant underlined that it was beneficial during the workshops that they spent time in the same hotel and spent "days and nights together", so there was a lot of time for chatting, having discussions and getting to know the other participants. The only negative comment about the workshops was from P07, as he felt that the number of participants decreased in every training session, which downgraded the group spirit and led to some negative feelings. He pointed out:

> *"I recall that as each workshop passed the group reduced in attendee numbers. I am sure this was for valid reasons, but for those that attended also with business pressure this downgraded the group value in the program and gave feelings of a tick the box exercise." (P07)*

It was noted that the entirety of the training was good and very practical, as the basic knowledge and theory was gained by studying the e-learning and participating in the webinars, after which it was possible to practice and apply the learning effectively in class. Moreover, participants thought that it would have been inefficient to spend time by studying theory in the workshop. One of the interviewees, aptly stated:

> *"We could do a lot of information gathering in the e-learning rather than spending that time in the class [..] and then in actual the face-to-face class we were actually doing case studies, role modeling and so on - applying that learning, so that was the best part." (P08)*

Both participants from UK01 described that the sales simulation did not work for them or their program group at all and they both suggested removing it from the training program. Another described it as an extremely unrealistic and that it just caused a huge amount of unnecessary stress among the participants, as everyone wanted to win, and everyone was just cheating and rushing and clicking every object.

4.2.3 Non-success case participants' reactions

Four non-success case participants were interviewed and three of them were from the TR01 program group. The common factor was they had not participated because of their own interest, and that someone else had forced them to participate or it had been mandatory for them. Table 32 presents some common factors which according to the literature can cause the failure or success of training, and the interviewees' opinions and answers regarding them.

Table 13. Reasons for failure of non-success participants

Participant	**P02**	**P04**	**P05**	**P10**
Program group	TR01	TR01	TR01	UK01
Participation	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Forced by someone else
Relevant content	No	No	No	No
Program organization	Good	Good	Good	Not good
Managerial support	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Trainer	Not good	Not good	Not good	Not good
Motivation	Fluctuating	Good	Good	Not good
Benefits from collaboration	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Any results	Successful project work	No	Successful project work	No

All the non-success participants described that the content was wrong. P02 said that they did not get any information about the content before the training. When the training had started and they had seen the content. He had also asked the trainer that if trainer believed that it was the right content for a group as experienced as they were, and the trainer had answered that it was not, but the decision was not made by him. He also explained that the trainer was not able to give any example of the project work, so it was difficult to understand the real meaning of the project.

All the participants from TR01 program group reported that the program was too easy and targeted less experienced sales managers. Both P02 and P04 said that the target group was totally wrong, and that it was mostly for the managers who had 0-5 years of experience, or sales engineers with 2-4 years of experience. Most of the TR01 participants had already participated in many similar training programs so they knew the theory already and the trainer was not able to give any added value to the training as he was less experienced than the participants.

P05 said that the main reason he did not get much value from the program was that the program was too general, and it should have been more special and customized for ABB internally. Two interviewees from the TR01 program group said that their motivation was good and one described that his motivation fluctuated since some sessions and topics were boring because they were too familiar for him from the previous training programs. Finally, all the TR01 interviewees shared the common opinion that the main problem was the trainer, as he was not experienced enough and did not have any experience in the sales field. As the trainer received so many comments and suggestion, it will be presented in a separate subsection.

For P10 the content was wrong because he was not a sales manager. Moreover, participant P10 was different from the other non-success participants in many ways. He was the only one who said that the program was organized badly: that the training sessions were not communicated initially, that the webinars were inconsistent and poorly organized, and that the trainer was not familiar with the course content. Because of that, he lost his motivation and interest in the training. He also said that he had difficulties finding time for the training in his daily job so he did not spend a lot of time learning outside the scheduled training sessions. One more difference between him and all the other interviewees was that he was the only one who gave negative feedback on his senior manager, as he stated that his manager was not engaged at all.

P10 stated that he did not get any results from the program, besides the networking and some new relationships which helped in collaboration. Furthermore, P04 mentioned that he did not get any results from the program, not even from networking. Moreover, he was

the only interviewee who wanted to reduce the number of workshops. He also said that he did not get any special results from the project, as it was just his standard work included in the training. Conversely, two participants from the TR01 program group said that their project was successful, and they got benefits from the discussion with participants from different businesses. Actually, the TR01 program group differed from the other groups, because in that group all the participants were from the same country, while all the other program groups included participants from different countries.

4.2.4 Project work

One topic of the interview was the project work that the participants did during the training. Their opinions about the project work varied a lot. Some of them said that it was the best part of the training, whereas some participants thought that would be better to separate the project work from the rest of the program and have it as a subsequent, separate training period. Below are some typical comments on the program:

> *"The project work was my standards work I adapt to this problem, it's not a new thing or nothing I'm doing for this program." (P04)*

> *"One thing I most liked about training was the project we had because it's always good when you have the opportunity to think about the areas which you can improve." (P02)*

> *"I found the project concept to have worked well but was surprised that there seemed to be a greater focus on the academic discussion than there was on the commercial/ outcomes, which surprised me based upon the cost of the program." (P07)*

P09 stated the choice of the project was key for the success in the training. He said that some participants choose a project topic which was not related to the course content but instead to tools, products, systems or marketing and got frustrated as they were not able

to apply the learning from the training to the practice. Another problem with the topic selection was that participants selected projects that were too complex, such as working with some systems which could not be done in ABB locally as they needed to be done at a corporate level, or were too massive, so they did not have the possibility to finish within six months. He thought that the participants would get more out of the course if the projects they selected were more in tune with their day to day activities. P08 described that many participants struggled to come up with an idea for their project work. In his opinion, the criteria set for the project were too wide. He stated:

> *"If you chose a project as I did, it was very easy to use the tools and the techniques that we learned, it was very easy to relate those tools to my project so the program and the project worked very well together. But some people chose projects and it wasn't that easy to use the program techniques to the project [..] You could choose anything you want and then and then because of this people were choosing projects that weren't that good fit and then they struggle to relate it to the program." (P08)*

Interviewees were also asked to estimate the monetary value of the results, but seldom were the participants able to give any accurate values. Many participants noted that their project is still on-going so it was not possible to estimate the value yet while others said that it was too soon to measure any reliable results yet. Additionally, the participants stated that it would be incorrect to say what results have occurred solely because of the training, as there are so many different factors with an impact on the final results, so they are not fully related to this training program. As P08 states:

> *"In general it's very difficult to put just one particular training which has led to the growth. It's many factors which are led to the goal. So saying like just having this training and applying what I learned has led to is the sole reason for the growth we've achieved would be incorrect there, as there are a lot of other factors from other parts of the business, so it's difficult to put a number to it." (P08)*

The results from the training according to the interviews are presented in Table 14. P01 is excluded, as his answer was too unclear. The topics and the results of the project

differed widely. Some of the participants were able to estimate some concrete results (e.g. an increased number of distributors from 6 to 10 and increased orders over 20% in 2018), whereas the other participants did not want to estimate any results.

Table 14. Participants' results from the project work.

Participant	The topic of the project	Results
P06	Increase the number of distributors	Increased the number of distributors in Indonesia from 6 to 10 and their orders increased over 20% in 2018.
P03	Sales team transformation – hiring a new employee to get team resources organized better and get one person to focus only on sales	The goal was to increase the quarterly sales result by 10% and also utilize the tools better, e.g. SFDC. Achieved 7-8%.
P02	Using SFDC to increase BU/Division/Product group collaboration	Increased collaboration, a lot of positive feedback.
P05	To increase the total motor + drive package turnover by 20% in the Bursa region.	Reached the target: last year the motor + drive package turnover was about 30% larger than previously.
P09	Increase new sales activity ("hunting")	Can't estimate the results yet, "*I don't want to guesstimate*".

4.2.5 The trainer

As presented earlier in Table 8, the program groups had three different trainers: T01, T02 and T03. T01 was by far the best of them; he got only positive feedback and all his participants felt he was an extremely experienced, engaging and good trainer and certainly added to the content and supported the learning. Moreover, his sense of humor and logical thinking was praised. Some interviewees noted that even though they had carried out their whole career in sales, the trainer was still able to provide some new ideas and share a lot of interesting information. Moreover, it was pointed out several times that he gave very practical tips which were experienced to be very useful after the training. Also, his knowledge of ABB was described as good. As stated by P08:

“He used to previously work for ABB as a sales training, so he is extremely good and knows the organization pretty well, that really helped because he knew the business, he knew the organization and knew the what our market and our customers are.” (P08)

T03, who was the trainer for the UK01 program group, received both positive and negative feedback from the participants. P10 participant rated him as a 2/5 and described that he was “evidently not versed in the course content”, whereas P09 stated that he was very good, experienced, helpful, engaging and included a lot of his own experiences from the sales field.

T02 got only negative feedback, and all the TR01 participants had the common opinion that the main problem of the failure of the program was the trainer, as he was not experienced enough and did not have any experience of the sales field. The interviewees said that the trainer was a good man, but the level of his experience was lower than the level of the participants’ knowledge. They said that “he was only a teacher, not a sales guy”. The interviewees also specified that he was not familiar with the course content and sometimes confused with the topics. One participant said that he was not able to answer their questions, which made the situations quite uncomfortable for the trainer and reduced the motivation of the participants. The following quotations illustrate these sentiments:

“It's more good for us if the trainer's come from sales, real sales, not teaching. you know the theory, but you don't know the real sales, that was the problem.” (P04)

“The trainer was good yeah, he's a good man, good at his job, but the trainer should be an ABB person because he should know our inside structures of ABB or something like that, specially designed for the ABB can be better.” (P05)

“Trainer tried to do his best, but also he understands the participants level higher than program level, what's not a fault of trainer.” (P04)

It was stated in many interviews that it would be better if a trainer was an internal person, for instance a BU manager or senior manager with a lot of experience at ABB. The interviewees believed that it would be useful to have an internal trainer who could talk about real cases in ABB, the structure of ABB and how to improve ABB business together. They also felt they were not really willing to discuss the improvement of ABB with an external person. They summarize the problem as follows:

> *"If he (trainer) was an ABB person maybe we can talk about the real cases lived in ABB before.. and talk about the structure of ABB after and before, how can we improve ABB's business together, we can discuss something like that but if the trainer is not ABB person you can't talk about something like that." (P05)*

> *"I think it would probably be better if it was internal because ABB is such a big company, so sometimes I wonder how can these third parties come in and truly understand our business and the diversity of our business in all the different divisions. and how can they truly understand everything up against because it is quite unique, in many respects ABB, so I just wonder how on earth he/she/whoever the trainer is, can be expected to guide us... Really, unless you work for ABB it's difficult to understand the process." (P09)*

On the other hand, interviewees recognized also pros of having an external trainer, because having someone from outside the business may provide a different perspective and a different view. They will also know what other companies do differently, so they may encourage the participants to look at something from a different angle, which maybe people from ABB internally would be less willing to do. Furthermore, it was stated that the core criteria for the trainer should be that he is able to apply the theory in practice, but that was seen as a competence which ABB does not have internally.

P02 said that he believed that a less experienced trainer, such as the one they had in their training, would be enough for a group of less experienced participants: as he could explain and teach the basic content if it was a new topic for the participants. But if the experience of the participants is higher than the "basic content", that same trainer would not be

enough anymore, because then the teaching should be more specific and detailed. Even though the content may be familiar to the participants, a highly experienced trainer can increase the value and the content of the training through his/her own experience, for example, by providing some important, useful and interesting examples. A less experienced trainer is not able to do that or cannot give any added value to the content or the training or moreover keep the attention of the participants. He puts it like this:

> *"Sales training is a little bit tricky if you don't have field experience. When you check our group, most of the participants they are field sales guys which coming from the fields, if you want to have high attention at training like this the experience field experience should be much higher than trainees. Trainers should have more experience actually because when you check the content it also mostly about making sales efficiently, so that means that the lecture should have good experience in sales field. If the trainer is a guy coming from the sales field, he is able to give life experience and examples at the training, which will help to concentrate the participants more effectively." (P02)*

4.2.6 Results from the training

The results from the program were discussed from two perspectives; first by looking at the benefits for the participant himself and then the benefits for ABB. Obviously, these two dimensions are tightly connected, as the personal development of the participants directly benefits the company and vice versa and the growth in business may lead to personal rewards. These rewards could be monetary or non-monetary, such as recognition from colleagues. As one participant described, the monetary reward is not everything, social recognition is also a very important reward from success.

One question was about the usage of the tools provided by the program. Mostly all participants reported that many good tools had been introduced and that they have been using the tools actively after the training. Many participants mentioned SalesForce as one of the tools they had used after the training, even though SalesForce was actually not part

of the training. On the other hand, many participants had their project work related to the use of SalesForce. Additionally, it was stated that the training did not just offer the tools, but a new mindset instead. As one of the interviewees put it: “This offers a mindset with a clear picture of where you stand, and where we stand as a whole team.” However, some of the more experienced participants did not view the presented tools as so useful, as they were already quite familiar with them. Some of them mentioned that they had not used any of the tools after the training, just SalesForce as before the training.

All of the success case interviewees believed that the training would help them to go further in their careers, while some of the non-success case participants felt that the training would not have any impact on going further in their career. The improved productivity and effectiveness, in different forms, were mentioned in most of the interviews as the most important benefit from the program. This is illustrated in the excerpts below:

> *“I think so it just changes like it makes me sort of more effective as a sales manager, basically more productive and more effective.” (P08)*

> *“After the program, after the implement, I think we can see the result: everything that is clear; direction is clear, the focus is clear, the resources alignment, all is clear.” (P01)*

> *“when you know when all the people working in a more active way and more passionate on their job and more focus on their job from the daily behave, you can know this training very work for us.” (P01)*

> *“Now I will be more proactive by using the CRM tool and I can manage the sales pipelines and provide our customer better service before they ask us... Though in the very end we will get more sales.” (P03)*

It was mentioned in many interviews that the training made their daily jobs more organized, clearer and better planned. The following topics were described as the most important things learnt:

- Visit planning and reporting
- Negotiation
- Account segmentation and segmentation planning
- The go-to-market model
- Sales profiling in terms of matching the profile of the salesperson to the customer or the industry
- Budgeting
- Measuring the activity and the competency of the sales team instead of just outputs

This is illustrated in the excerpt below:

> *"Well, he (trainer) mentioned that only discipline can make people succeed [..] so I remind myself to be discipline.. For example, if I want to do my sales job better I need to have the action plan and I need to make it a habit so I can rather do my job as a behavior not only a reaction." (P03)*

Systematic, monitored or better-managed pipeline management was mentioned as a key result from the program in many interviews. Also, sales visits or visit planning was mentioned in some form by each success case participant. They felt that they had increased both the number and the quality of their sales visits, as well as monitored and planned their visits better than earlier. P06 noted that the training ad given him a new perspective on customer visits, as the trainer had taught him that if he as a manager visited a customer with his salesperson, he was not the key person but just accompanying them. According to that, he changed his behavior so that he just took a background role giving his salespersons a chance to see how they could develop themselves. Moreover, P01 described that the program emphasized the importance of visit planning, so he explained that after the program they have been making a visit plan beforehand for a whole week, so nowadays they always know clearly what activities and visits they will have during the week.

The benefits for ABB were described to be much the same as the benefits for the participants themselves and their sales teams: growth in sales and profitability, increased collaboration and improved effectiveness. It was also described that after the training the participants and their teams were more focused on the strategy and had a clearly defined strategy in-line either with ABB's next level strategy and marketing and sales strategy. This was expressed well in the following excerpts:

> *"In terms of my approach with my team we focus on the strategy, having a clearly defined strategy either in-line with ABB's next level strategy and marketing & sales (strategy)- so now I'm certainly more focused after doing the course and my guys on the back of that will be more focused." (P09)*

> *"As I mentioned, now are we having a clear vision and a clear direction. I think the biggest benefit from this program is the maximize of the team resources." (P01)*

> *"Collaboration is the first benefit for ABB, the collaboration with the other guys from different BUs and which was chatting on the workshops how can I improve myself and our business together and how can we do something different, give benefits together." (P05)*

> *"After this training, I believe the sales targets have been better managed by using the tools especially SFDC because I can contribute more sales results that ABB requests ask and usually I can do better than ABB requests." (P03)*

> *"[..] we have grown in sales, we have grown in profitability, so there is a direct benefit -so you're more efficient and more effective." (P08)*

The participants felt that the learning was most useful which was immediately possible to use or try in daily work or which was strongly related to it. Many more experienced sales managers described that the program content was already familiar to them and they were aware of a lot of things, but the program gave them an understanding of how it all

fits together and provided insight into how to apply those things in daily working practices and tied all the learning together in an organized way. As P08 described:

> *"It's not like anything that was told I was not aware of, but I would say how to apply that learning. That is what I would say was the most important thing, what I could learn from this training, so it was not that not really the content it was more the application of the content that is what I actually took on as a project as well." (P08)*

The more experienced participants also highlighted the social aspect of the training and described that the major benefits of the program were the discussions and knowledge sharing with other colleagues from other countries and other business units, and the possibility to take a break from their daily work. Some participants stated that their key learning came from the insights they gleaned from discussions and experience sharing with other participants. The following comments illustrate some other thoughts concerning networking and collaboration below:

> *"Having only been with ABB for a relatively short time but in sales for the 20+ majority of the concepts delivered were those I have been aware of previously, but it was highly beneficial to understand ABB Interpretations of these and also the interaction in the workshops in understanding how other business units apply and interpret these. As with all training, that removes you from the day to day operations it provides time to review and reflect and this is beneficial." (P07)*

> *"The program gave me a chance to take a breath, to think to think about the theoretical things; how can I improve myself as a sales manager, how can I do it with effectively something, how can I program my time effectively, my team effectively and what was coaching." (P05)*

> *"Always when you meet with different guys from different BU's or organizations it's good to talk about sales. Because every time you share information, you can sure learn and improve yourself actually. We shared a lot of experiences, so I think it was quite useful." (P02)*

Moreover, there were benefits from having participants from different levels in the program, as P09 described that the biggest benefit for him was the increased self-confidence from dealing with more senior managers. He pointed out that at the beginning, he was slightly apprehensive since the majority of the participants were extremely experienced, so he was comparing himself to the others and mistrusted his knowledge as a sales manager. During the training, his confidence grew, and he described that:

> *"I did still learn a few things from the other managers but I'm certainly on a par with them in terms of competency to be a sales manager and that was it that was a big thing for my own personal confidence." (P09)*

Surprisingly, some of the participants who were classified as non-success cases described that they had used some tools provided by the program or received some good results and benefits from the program. P05 noted that the program had given him good technical and theoretical information which he did not usually get the chance to learn about as he spends his time mostly in the sales field with customers. In contrast to this, P04 said he did not get any results or learn anything new from the program, as he already knew the content and he had already had a lot of similar courses. Also, P10 described that networking was the only benefit that he or ABB got from the program.

4.2.7 Suggestions

Some participants didn't find any places for improvement, but most of the received suggestions from the non-success case participants were about the trainer or the need for a better-defined target group. The interviewees clearly agreed that the trainer should be internal or at least know ABB better, as discussed earlier. Moreover, all the non-success case participants felt that more attention should be paid to clarifying the target group. Many interviewees commented that the proper target audience for the program would be sales managers, or sales engineers, with less than five years of experience. P02 described

that overall the idea of the program was good, but it should focus more on the selection of the trainer and the participants. He stated:

> *"My opinion about the content is that is mostly for 0 to 5 years experienced managers. When I checked our group, most of that participants had 10 plus years of experience so sometimes it was boring." (P02)*

Some suggestions about the structure of the training and the training methods were also given. Some participants mentioned that they did not receive any information after the program, for example, whether it would be done again. Some of them mentioned that they would have also like to nominate some of their salespersons for the training but did not know how. The participants were also looking for a stronger conclusion or graduation session for the program. This is expressed in the excerpts below from the interviews:

> *"I think the course would be better served in extending to an additional workshop session to allow a final review and learning consolidation that should capture some take away actions to be completed." (P07)*

> *"Would be good to see recognition by senior management and have a graduation session and provide all with certificates of completion." (P07)*

Overall the participants felt that the structure of the training was good, but some of them would like to increase the amount of face-to-face-training, with one or two more workshops. On the other hand, not all of them wanted to increase the number of workshops, because then it would also require more time and resources for the training. Additionally, it was suggested that the theory part could be removed from the workshops and done offline via e-learning and webinars. In that way it would be possible to reduce the length of the program and save resources or focus on role-plays and other practical things in the workshop. According to one interviewee, the program would be better as an attended workshop course. Some participants also pointed out that the training would be better without sales simulator. These sentiments are expressed in the following extracts from the interviews:

"If you want to sort of reduce the length of the program, we can have more e-learnings because, I mean ultimately, we are all sales managers and pretty experienced people and we can do a lot of sort of homework in e-learning." (P08)

"Webinars are a great idea from a cost perspective, but what you find is that the attendees don't focus, too many distractions emails/business meetings etc. Workshops are more expensive, but you get the attention and participation from the candidates for the full duration of the program. I think the return on investment is better with a workshop attended by the candidates." (P10)

Moreover, many possible suggestions to improve the project work section were received. P09 explained that the start of the training was vague and the content and the objectives of the training and the project should be better discussed. Participants felt that it was difficult to understand the meaning of the project work, and this was why many participants chose a topic outside the course content. Many of the interviewees were hoping for better guidance with the project work and especially with choosing the topic. The participants suggested that it would be good to have an archive of old project work or success stories as an example of what kind of topics they could choose. They felt that otherwise some participants would do whatever they want, which would also take the discussions away from the actual course content. This was expressed by the interviewees in the following excerpts:

"I think if everyone knew at the start that you know we are sales managers and the course is going to give you tools and techniques to be an even better sales manager so an obvious thing to choose is something sales related so you can measure the success of your improved sales management." (P09)

"Then again support around the project choice I think is key because again it enables the trainer to know how to digress so much into so many different... We were constantly talking about marketing or salesforce or .. If the project choices were more similar, we wouldn't have digressed so much around topics that weren't

relevant to the course. I think it would have kept us more on a sales management strategy level as it, but we were digressing a lot and that was because of the variation of the projects." (P09)

4.3 Key findings

This chapter reviews the research questions.

Research question 1: *What factors support or prevent the success of the training?*

According to the existing literature about sales management training practices, there are various supporting or preventive factors which affect the results and success of the training. Furthermore, earlier studies have shown the difficulty of training sales managers, as according to these studies, not any single type of training approach, instructor or training method has been viewed to be highly effective in the training of sales managers (Gordon et al. 2012).

Figure 20 summarizes the identified success factors found from the empirical research but also according to the earlier literature. The most important factors that support the success of the training program are classified under five key categories: the supervisor, project work, organizational support, training design, and individual characteristics. The identified factors included the senior manager's support, involvement, and attitude, as well as the organizational climate and support, including rewards, the opportunity to use learned skills and the attitude toward the preferred change. In some earlier studies, the organizational climate refers to senior manager's support, where as some other studies it means how the participants' daily work allows his/her learning. Additionally, the participant's individual characteristics, such their desire to change, motivation and commitment, all affect the success of the training.

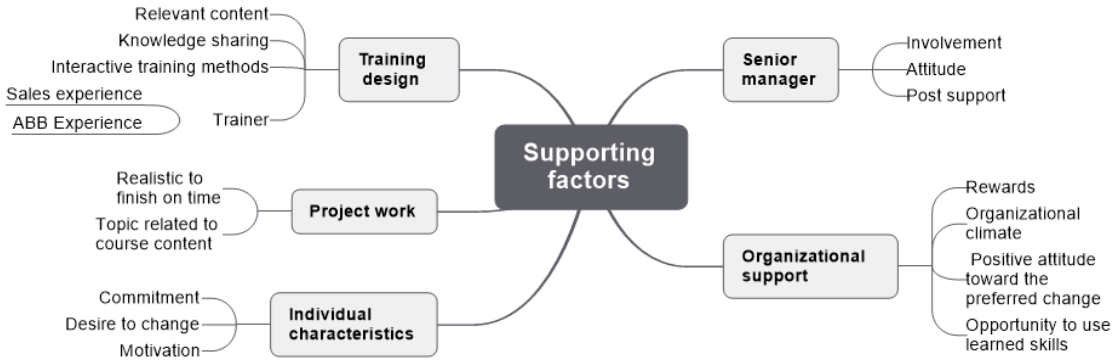

Figure 19. Success factors

Moreover, the topic of project work and the training design, including interactive training methods, relevant content, knowledge sharing, and the trainer were found to have an impact on the success of the training. Linking the training topic to the organizational mission, strategy and goals were also mentioned as increasing the likelihood of producing valuable results for the organization and contributing towards the success of the program.

In contrast, Figure 21 presents the factors which prevent the success of the training. The factors are classified under the same five key categories. As can be seen, the same factors are repeated mostly in both of the figures. In addition, it was found that participants who had already completed similar programs or were forced to participate in the program were less motivated to complete the program. The wrong content relates also to the target group, as the target group for the program were first line sales managers with more than one year of experience, but according to this research, some of the participants were outside of the target group and did not even working as sales managers. Furthermore, a lack of time for learning from the daily work schedule was found to be a preventive factor for the success of the training.

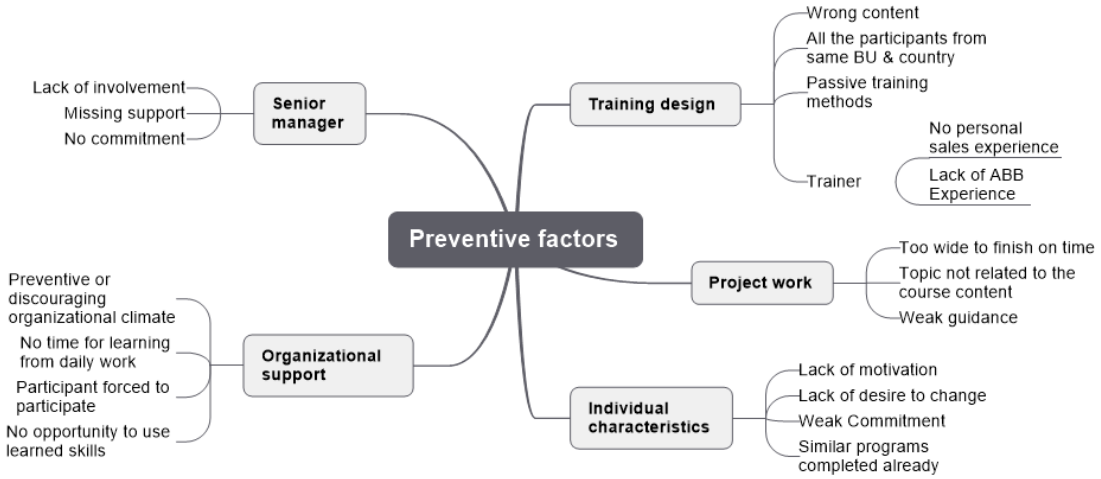

Figure 20. Preventive factors

Earlier studies have proved that the senior manager plays a crucial role in sales management training and the lack of managerial support has been noted to be the most critical factor against the success of the training (Shepherd et al. 2011; Gordon et al. 2012). In this research, the senior management role was not found to be that crucial. During the interviews, mostly all the participants said that their line manager was really encouraging and engaged, so the differences in managerial support were not noticeable. Additionally, in the questionnaire, the participants' reactions to the support of their senior managers was mostly (78%) positive and there was no correlation between the senior managers' support and the results of the program. One reason for the good ratings may be that many of the participants were nominated by their senior manager, which possibly eliminates discouraging senior managers. Furthermore, only one participant rated his senior manager's support as discouraging, which was a possible reason why that participant got the second worst results according to the survey.

Based on the empirical research, there were two factors which seemed to be the most critical factors related to the success of the ESM program. The first was the trainer. Gordon et al. (2012) state that the training should be provided in the field by those who are either senior managers or more knowledgeable on the training topic than the sales managers themselves, which was supported by the results of this research, as the

interviewees stated that the trainer must have personal experience in the sales field. Additionally, both the interviews and the earlier studies suggested that the trainer should be an internal employee who knows the company and can share his/her personal experiences with the participants. Interestingly, the trainer seemed to have a stronger impact on the relevancy of the content than the experience of the participants. Even though there were some very experienced participants who had spent their whole careers in sales, they still felt that they gained a lot of new, useful knowledge from the training, if the trainer was sufficiently knowledgeable.

The second crucial factor for the success of the ESM program was found to be the topic of the project work. As the purpose of the project work is to apply the learned theory in practice, it is critical to choose a topic which is truly related to the training content. Many participants chose a topic which was not related to the program topic, so it was not possible to apply the learned tools and the techniques in the project. Furthermore, the participant chose overly wide projects, which were impossible to finish in six months. Most of them were not able to estimate the value of their project, as it was not ready yet or they felt that it would be incorrect to say what results have happened solely because of the training because there were so many different factors with an impact on the final results, so they are not fully related to this training program. This can be seen also in the survey results, as 43 percent answered that their project was not completed yet. On the other hand, 41 percent reported that they had completed their projects with positive results.

Research question 2: *What benefits has ABB achieved with the Effective Sales Management program?*

The learning objectives for the ESM program are that the participants should be able to drive a sales transformation by using the available processes and tools effectively as well as drive sales productivity and individual effectiveness. According to the answers provided by the participants in this study, the participants reached these goals mostly well. Increased effectiveness and productivity were mentioned as the most important results in nearly all interviews, and as discussed earlier, individual development directly benefits

the company and supports the business. According to the survey, most of the respondents experienced some improvements (51%) or significant improvements (17%) in their productivity. The interviewees noted that the program helped them to be more productive sales managers, but also to develop their sales team to be more effective. Additionally, many participants adopted new tools, which helped to make their daily work better organized and more effective. 44 percent of survey respondents reported having used the knowledge and skills from the training to improve their own performance and their sales teams with clearly positive results. Moreover, as a sales manager can effectively lead his/her sales team better, it will develop the sales team further and lead to growth in sales.

It was pointed out in many interviews that the training had made the participants' daily work more organized, clearer and better planned, as well as brightened their strategy and enabled them to provide better service to their customers. One direct benefit for ABB was the increased collaboration at the country, BU and division levels. Systematic, monitored and better-managed pipeline management and visit planning were described as key areas of learning in many interviews. Many of the participants had their project related to the use of SDFC, which has helped them to manage their sales pipeline better and more systematically. Moreover, participants described that the new learning concerning sales visit planning had increased the number of customer visits and their quality, and the participants had started to monitor whether they were visiting the right customers and whether the visits resulted in increased new sales activity. It was also mentioned that after the program the participants' own strategy was clearer and better in line with ABB's next level strategy, which increases the likelihood that the interventions are producing results which are valued by the organization (Holton 1996).

It became clear that the participants were not able to give accurate results or estimate any monetary values. The reason for this was that many participants' projects were still on-going so it was not possible to estimate the value yet. Furthermore, the participants stated that it would be incorrect to say what results have happened solely because of the training because there are so many different factors, such as the market situation or organizational changes which have an impact on the final results. Moreover, as they described that the results were not fully related to this training program, they were not willing to estimate

any monetary results. However, the program participants had completed quite successful projects. Some examples of the project results included new customers or channel partners, increased collaboration between business units and an increase in sales orders or sales results. According to the survey, 34 percent of the participants believed that the 1,500 USD investment in the training had already paid itself back, while 59 percent believed that it would be paid back at the latest within a couple of years.

Research question 3: *How could the Effective Sales Management program be improved?*

Based on the data collected from the interviews, the survey and the existing literature on sales management training, the following recommendations for improvement were found. The recommendations are strongly related to the factors which were found to be the most crucial for the success of the training program.

The trainer. The first area of improvement is the trainer. As earlier studies have found, internal trainers are perceived to be more effective than external trainers. Moreover, it is important that the trainer is knowledgeable about the particular circumstances and conditions that the sales managers face in their daily work, which can be difficult for an external trainer. As a suggestion, the case company should utilize the talent and the knowledge they have within the organization. An internal trainer, for example a senior sales manager, could make the program more company specific, for example by sharing his/her own experiences, giving ABB related examples, and encouraging more from the discussions and collaboration. Secondly, the trainer should have comprehensive personal experience of the sales field, so he/she can provide real-life examples and relate his/her own experiences, which would add value to the basic content of the training.

Gordon et al. (2012) state that just as a successful salesperson may not become a successful sales manager, the successful sales manager may not become a good trainer and more attention should be paid also to training the trainers. Moreover, when starting the program in a new country, collaboration with local HR should be increased to find the best trainers. Some participants felt that they have had good external trainers in some

earlier training programs, so it would be useful to have an internal database of the external trainers who have been used in the earlier training programs. As a conclusion, more attention should be paid both to choosing new trainers as well as training the trainers.
In this program, the content was the same for all the program groups, but the participants' experience of the relevancy of the training content varied a lot between the program groups. It was found that the trainer had a crucial impact on the training content. In the survey, the TR01 participants, whose trainer was considered to be the worst of all the trainers rated in the study, rated the training content significantly less relevant than the other program groups and during the interviews stated that the content was too easy and was in fact wrong for them. Interestingly, the most experienced participants rated the content to be more relevant than the less experienced participants. The research findings indicate that the trainer has a great impact on the content, as a good trainer is able to add to the content to make it valuable and engaging also for experienced participants with his/her own knowledge and real-life examples.

Program delivery. Generally, the training approach was considered to be good, as the theory was learned via e-learning, and the workshops were focused on practicing the aspect learnt and no time was needed to spend on learning the theory anymore. However, the Internet-based training methods were not felt to be as useful as the workshops, but it was agreed that the participants just needed to get used to web-based training, as it will be the way to deliver training in the future. The most common reason the participants did not like the web-based learning was mentioned to be the lack of interaction.

Even though the instructor-led webinars were a more interactive and participative training method than e-learning, the average grade for the e-learning was higher than the average for the webinars. This seems to imply that the webinars have some areas for improvement, as they have the possibility to be interactive and participative, but the participants did not experience them to be so. The trainer has a crucial role in webinars, and the trainer should avoid just reading the slides passively, in a lecture-like way. Instead, polls, asking more questions from the participants, with exercises, challenges or group work should be used and the participants should be encouraged to chat and share their experiences in the webinars to make the webinars more interactive and help to keep the participants

concentrated. Furthermore, e-learning methods should also be developed to be more interesting so that the participants would be more interested in studying them all the way through instead of cheating on them. Furthermore, as the sales simulator received only very negative feedback, it is recommended to exclude it from the training program.

Project work. The criteria set for the project topics were too broad and the aim of the project was not communicated clearly enough. Participants felt that choosing a project topic was difficult and more support, guidance and examples about previous projects were needed. Participants should select projects that are truly related to the course content so they are able to apply the learning from the training in practice. Success stories and elaborate examples from earlier projects should be added to the program site and shown when starting the training. It should be highlighted that the project topic needs to relate to the program topic and that it should not be too wide so it can be completed on time, as 43 percent of the participants answered that their project was not completed even though the program has ended.

4.4 Limitations

Like all empirical studies, this research has a number of limitations that reduce the generalizability of the results. First, the research was conducted as a case study, so the results cannot be generalized. However, generalizability was not a major goal in this study, as the current approach provides the necessary information for decision making, which is the critical factor in program evaluation. Secondly, the SCM design does not produce a representative picture of the study sample. A third consideration is that the causation between training and subsequent behavioral or results is hard to prove. The results of performance, for instance, an increase in sales, is also influenced by many other external factors, such as market conditions or organizational changes.

Moreover, this study does not take into account the differences between gender or cultural issues. Furthermore, one limitation is that the interviews were held in English, so there

might be some language barriers. The level of English was not that high among all the participants, as can be seen from some of the direct quotes from their answers, so it could be possible that some participants were not able to impress themselves as well as they could do in their native language.

4.5 Future research

Based on this research, one highly interesting area for further investigation could be the competencies of sales management role. Competency can be described as someone's ability to do something successfully or efficiently. The Evolute system, which is a web-based platform, provides a number of tools for different job profiles with the purpose of evaluating competencies using generic models. Those tools work as a form of self-evaluation and the results reflect the individual's perception of his or her current and targeted competence. (Imran & Kantola 2018.) However, the Evolute system does not include a model for the sales management role, which could be an interesting area for future research. Moreover, it would be interesting to evaluate the sales managers' competencies before and after the training program.

The second area for future research could be web-based training methods. This is because they will most likely be the main way to deliver training in the future, and it would be interesting to examine how they could be developed to be more effective, interactive, and participative.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study was commissioned by ABB. The purpose of this research was to evaluate ABB's internal Effective Sales Management program, which is a six-month-long blended learning program for first-line sales managers with at least one year of experience in a sales management position. This study aimed to identify the critical factors for the success and failure of training transfer, which helps to develop the program further but also evaluates the achieved results of the program.

The literature review of the study focused on the existing literature about sales management training and training evaluation, as well as the common reasons for the failure of training. It came up that previous research on sales management training has mainly been done some decades ago, and there has been a clear lack of research concerning the effectiveness of sales management training. Moreover, the previous research is mainly focused on the most used training practices instead of how sales managers really should be trained so that the training would be effective and successful.

The research was conducted using Brinkerhoff's Success Case Method. At first, an online survey was conducted and 73 participants from five different program groups were contacted and asked to complete a survey. Eventually, 41 participants responded to the survey, so the response rate was 60.2%. After the results of the survey were received, 10 participants with the highest or lowest results based on the questionnaire were interviewed in semi-structured interviews.

The findings of this study suggest that the trainer is the most critical factor for the success of the training. It was found to be important that the trainer knows ABB, but also has comprehensive personal experience of the sales field. A good trainer has the capability to make the training content relevant and interesting also for the more experienced sales managers with his or her own experience. Secondly, the training includes individual project work aiming to apply the learning from the training in practice, so choosing a relevant topic for the project was found to be a key to success, both in the project and for

the entire training program. If the topic is not related to the training content, the participant is not able to apply the learning and tools from the program in the project, which is the actual purpose of the project.

The findings of this study indicate that the most important areas for improvement are the trainer and the project work. As a recommendation, ABB should prefer internal trainers instead of external trainers and more attention should be paid both to choosing new trainers as well as training the trainers. Currently, the criteria set for the project topic is too wide and the aim of the project is not communicated clearly enough, so more focus should be paid to guiding and supporting the participants in choosing their project work topics. In addition. the empirical results of the research found that web-based training methods, especially webinars, were not experienced as supporting the learning as well the other training methods, so they should be evolved to become more interactive and participative.

As the most important result of the program the interviewed participants reported increased individual effectiveness and productivity, individually and within the sales team. Their project work was mostly successfully, but unfortunately, they were not able to describe the precise value of the results as they felt that it could not be pin-pointed in a reliable way because the success was seen as the sum of many different factors. As a result, the company can conclude that the program is effective at least for the fresh sales managers, but with a sufficiently experienced trainer, the program can be effective and useful also for sales managers who have been in sales for their entire careers.

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APPENDIX 1. Questionnaire Cover Letter

Dear Recipient,

You are invited to participate in a research study regarding the Effective Sales Management (ESM) Program. This survey has been sent to all the ESM program participants who have completed the training within one year. The objectives of this research study are to evaluate the perceived benefits of the Effective Sales Management program and to determine how the program can be improved in the future.

The following questionnaire will require only a few minutes to complete and it is a SharePoint survey. The link to the survey is attached to this e-mail. All answers are handled confidentially and will be reported only as a collective combined total. No one other than the researcher will know your individual answers to this questionnaire. Please answer all the questions as honestly as possible. Based on the answers to the questionnaire, some participants will be invited to interviews. The interview will focus on real impacts from the training and key factors for success or failure.

URL to the survey is: XX

Please fill out the questionnaire as soon as possible, at the latest by November 8. This survey is related to a master's thesis, made by Sanni Sallanko at the University of Vaasa. If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about participating in this study, please contact me at sanni.sallanko@fi.abb.com.

Thanking you for your co-operation!

With best regards,
Sanni Sallanko,
Master's Thesis Worker

APPENDIX 2. Questionnaire

Section 1: Background information

Question 1. What was your learner group? *

- AU01 (04/2017-09/2018, Workshops held in Sydney and Brisbane)
- MY01 (08/2017-01/2018, Workshops held in Kuala Lumpur)
- MY02 (10/2017-03/2018, Workshops held in Kuala Lumpur)
- TR01 (04/2018-10/2018, Workshops held in Istanbul)

Question 2. What is your job role? *

Question 3. How many years of experience do you have in sales management position? *

Section 2: Training reactions

Question 4. Please rate each of the following objects on a rating scale of 1-5. *

	Not at all 1	2	Average 3	4	Very well 5
A. How well was the whole training program organized?					
B. How well was the content of the program delivered?					
C. How well did the training content meet your needs?					
D. How well did the trainer enable your learning and success with your development project?					
E. How well did your daily work allow you to spend time learning during this program?					

Question 5. Topics *

	Very irrelevant		Average		Very relevant
	1	2	3	4	5
How relevant were the topics covered in the program for your job?	○	○	○	○	○

Question 6. NPS *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
How likely are you to recommend this training to your colleague?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Question 7. Please rate how much the following parts of the training program added value to your learning? *

	Not at all		Somewhat		Very much
	1	2	3	4	5
E-learning	○	○	○	○	○
Webinars	○	○	○	○	○
Workshops	○	○	○	○	○
Project work	○	○	○	○	○

Question 8. What was your supervisor's support and attitude toward the training program? *

- ○ Preventive (my supervisor prevented me to act as the training program taught to do)
- ○ Discouraging (my supervisor didn't directly prevent me from doing something but he or she made clear that it is not desirable that I change my behavioral according the training)
- ○ Neutral (my supervisor ignores my attendance at the training program and had nothing against the change as long as the job got done)
- ○ Encouraging (my supervisor encourages me to learn, was interested to know what I had learned and wanted to help me to transfer the learning to the job)
- ○ Requiring (my supervisor knew the content of the training well and made sure it was transferred to the job)

Section 3: Results of the training

Question 9. Did this training improve your job productivity? *

- ○ Yes, my productivity has significantly improved.

- Yes, I can see some improvement in my productivity.
- I haven't experienced any productivity improvement yet.
- No, I didn't learn anything that could improve my productivity.

Question 10. Which statement best represents your own commitment to this training program? *

- I had sincere interest and I was fully committed to growing and performing to my fullest ability.
- I was mostly positive, but I didn't commit fully to the effort.
- I wasn't as committed as this training program needed.
- I had no commitment at all to this program.

Question 11. Have you used the knowledge and skills from this training to your job to improve your own performance and your sales team? *

- Yes, with clearly positive results.
- Yes, but I haven't experienced any remarkable results yet.
- Not yet, but I expect to.
- I don't have any plans to do this.

Question 12. Which statement best represents the success of your project work? *

- The project was successful, and I achieved the goals I set with positive results.
- I completed a project work, but I haven't experienced any results yet.
- I have started the project work, but it isn't complete yet.
- I haven't done the project work.

Question 13. The investment for this training program was about 1500 USD per participant. How long do you think it will take/took to cover this investment by your and/or your sales team improved productivity? *

- It has already paid back.
- I believe it will be paid back within the next 6 months.
- I believe it will be paid back within a couple of years.
- It is very unlikely to be paid back.

APPENDIX 3. Frame for semi-structured interviews

Question 1: Participation

How did you get involved in this training program?

Sub questions:

- Where did you get the information on the program?
- Who decided you should participate?
- What was your major reason to attend?
- What had you heard about the program before participating?
- Who other from your organization was involved in the program?

Question 2: Results of the program

How have you applied your learning and what positive things have happened because of and since this training?

Sub questions:

- How have you used any of the tools provided by the program?
- What has been the most important benefit you have got from the program?
- What have the benefits been for ABB from program?
- Do you think that this training program supports you to get further in your career?
- Can you give me a specific example of benefits?

Question 3: Project work

Can you tell me about your project and what kind of results you have achieved with it? Can you estimate the monetary value of the results?

Sub questions:

- What was the topic of your project?
- What actions did it include?
- What were the KPIs?
- What were the results of the project?

Question 4: Characteristics of the program

What characteristics of the program itself made it successful/unsuccessful for you?

Sub questions:

- Was the content of the program right for you?
- How well was the content of the program delivered?
- What is your opinion on the different training methods (webinars, workshops, project)?
- Trainer?
- How well was the whole training program organized?
- How well did your daily work allow you to spend time learning during this program?

Question 5: Other success factors

What other factors led your training to be successful? Can you name what especially made this program work for you?

Sub questions:

- Your work environment? Your sales team/ your colleagues//…
- Did you get some incentives or rewards?
- Support from colleagues?
- Your personal attitude or commitment?
- What are some other motivators that worked for you?
- During the program, did you benefit from the discussion with colleagues outside of your own organization?

Question 6: Line manager's role

Research has shown that one thing which makes a lot of difference is the support of a line manager. How do you see your senior managers' role during the training? Did he help you in your project?

Sub questions:

- Did he participate in the senior managers' webinars?
- Did you have the meetings which were included in the program schedule?

- What exactly did your line manager do that set him or her apart from others and makes him unique?
- Did he or she discuss the objectives for your learning at the beginning of the program?
- Did your senior manager show interest on the program content? Did he ask about your action plan according to what you have learned?
- Did your line manage follow the progress of your project work?

Question 7: Barriers and improvement?

- How could the program be improved?
- Is there something you would like to change in the program?
- What would have helped you to get more benefits from the program?

APPENDIX 4. Correlation matrix

	Training methods				Reactions									Results					
Question	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Total [a]
Q1. Experience	1	-.04	-.150	-.200	-.059	-.099	-.283	-.403**	-.345*	-.309*	-.370*	-.163	.074	-.165	-.051	-.138	.149	-.081	-.068
Q2. Project work	-.204	1	.735**	.496**	.438**	.669**	.606**	.628**	.495**	.707**	.567**	.723**	.153	.510**	.327*	.293	-.014	.195	.334*
Q3. Workshop	-.150	.735**	1	.436**	.254	.539**	.634**	.621**	.468**	.633**	.582**	.684**	.246	.413**	.322*	.270	.112	.358*	.393*
Q4. Webinar	-.200	.496**	.436**	1	.503**	.621**	.378*	.387*	.353*	.523**	.525**	.446**	.086	.310*	.074	.240	-.086	.375*	.248
Q5. E-learning	-.059	.438**	.254	.503**	1	.563**	.502**	.343*	.207	.416**	.423**	.465**	.141	.394*	.216	.431**	-.120	.137	.263
Q6. Topics	-.099	.669**	.539**	.621**	.563**	1	.471**	.620**	.370*	.693**	.584**	.652**	.148	.745**	.500**	.537**	.039	.540**	.620**
Q7. Delivery	-.283	.606**	.634**	.378*	.502**	.471**	1	.798**	.520**	.674**	.723**	.667**	.000	.405**	.345*	.451**	-.022	.434**	.426**
Q8. Trainer	-.403**	.628**	.621**	.387*	.343*	.620**	.798**	1	.597**	.801**	.787**	.778**	.037	.626**	.414**	.423**	.050	.573**	.556**
Q9. Daily work	-.345*	.495**	.468**	.353*	.207	.370*	.520**	.597**	1	.483**	.533**	.569**	-.112	.451**	.201	.270	-.100	.136	.239
Q10.Content	-.309*	.707**	.633**	.523**	.416**	.693**	.674**	.801**	.483**	1	.755**	.774**	.148	.628**	.482**	.535**	.017	.512**	.571**
Q11. Organization	-.370*	.567**	.582**	.525**	.423**	.584**	.723**	.787**	.533**	.755**	1	.636**	.090	.569**	.403**	.511**	.044	.490**	.533**
Q12. NPS	-.163	.723**	.684**	.446**	.465**	.652**	.667**	.778**	.569**	.774**	.636**	1	.323*	.629**	.288	.389*	-.034	.414**	.442**
Q13. Senior manager	.074	.153	.246	.086	.141	.148	.000	.037	-.112	.148	.090	.323*	1	.209	.166	.258	.127	.162	.245
Q14. Productivity	-.165	.510**	.413**	.310*	.394*	.745**	.405**	.626**	.451**	.628**	.569**	.629**	.209	1	.599**	.610**	.254	.494**	.775**
Q15. Commitment	-.051	.327*	.322*	.074	.216	.500**	.345*	.414**	.201	.482**	.403**	.288	.166	.599**	1	.632**	.399**	.442**	.803**
Q16. Training transfer	-.138	.293	.270	.240	.431**	.537**	.451**	.423**	.270	.535**	.511**	.389*	.258	.610**	.632**	1	.278	.450**	.778**
Q17. Project results	.149	-.014	.112	-.086	-.120	.039	-.022	.050	-.100	.017	.044	-.034	.127	.254	.399**	.278	1	.278	.619**
Q18. ROI	-.081	.195	.358*	.375*	.137	.540**	.434**	.573**	.136	.512**	.490**	.414**	.162	.494**	.442**	.450**	.278	1	.742**
Total [a]	-.068	.334*	.393*	.248	.263	.620**	.426**	.556**	.239	.571**	.533**	.442**	.245	.775**	.803**	.778**	.619**	.742**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
[a] Calculated from questions Q12-Q18

Q1. Experience
Q2. Project work
Q3. Workshop
Q4. Webinar
Q5. E-learning
Q6. Topics
Q7. Program delivery
Q8. Trainer
Q9. Daily work
Q10.Content
Q11. Program organized
Q12. NPS
Q13. Senior manager
Q14. Productivity
Q15. Commitment
Q16. Training transfer
Q17. Project results
Q18. ROI