



| 5 SALES PROSPECTING MYTHS DEBUNKED

488 Buyers Sound Off About How Sellers
Get Through and Win Their Business

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RAIN Group
CENTER FOR SALES RESEARCH

PROSPECTING IS CHANGING. HERE'S HOW TO GET THROUGH AND WIN SALES.

*57% of purchase decisions are made before a customer calls a supplier.
67% of the buying journey is done digitally. Buyers don't want to hear from sellers. Cold calling is dead. It's impossible for sellers to get through to buyers. With all the information available on the Internet, buyers do their own research. Buyers don't want to hear about your capabilities.*

Sellers are given these messages all the time.

Are they true?

According to the 488 buyers we talked to, and 489 sellers who prospect, absolutely not. In fact, their opposites are true.

Selling has changed a lot in the last 10 years, and it is true that prospecting has changed the most. However, what people *say* is happening and what is *really* happening are not the same things.

Conventional wisdom usually sounds good, but it can be both wrong and unhelpful. Such is the case with sales prospecting.

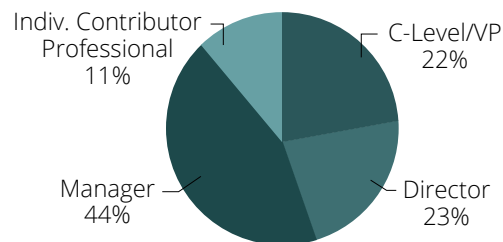
In this report, you'll find five prospecting myths debunked with new data and insights from the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research's recent buyer and seller analysis. Take them to heart if you want to break through to top executives, fill your pipeline, and win more sales.

DEMOGRAPHICS

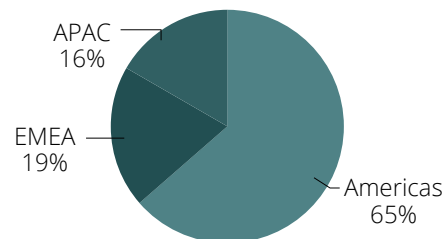
BUYER

- 488 buyers responsible for \$4.2 billion in purchases
- Over 25 industries

Roles



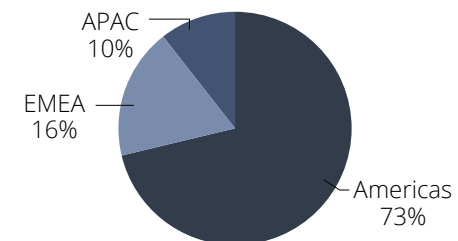
Geography



SELLER

- 489 sellers
- 26 industries

Geography



MYTH 1

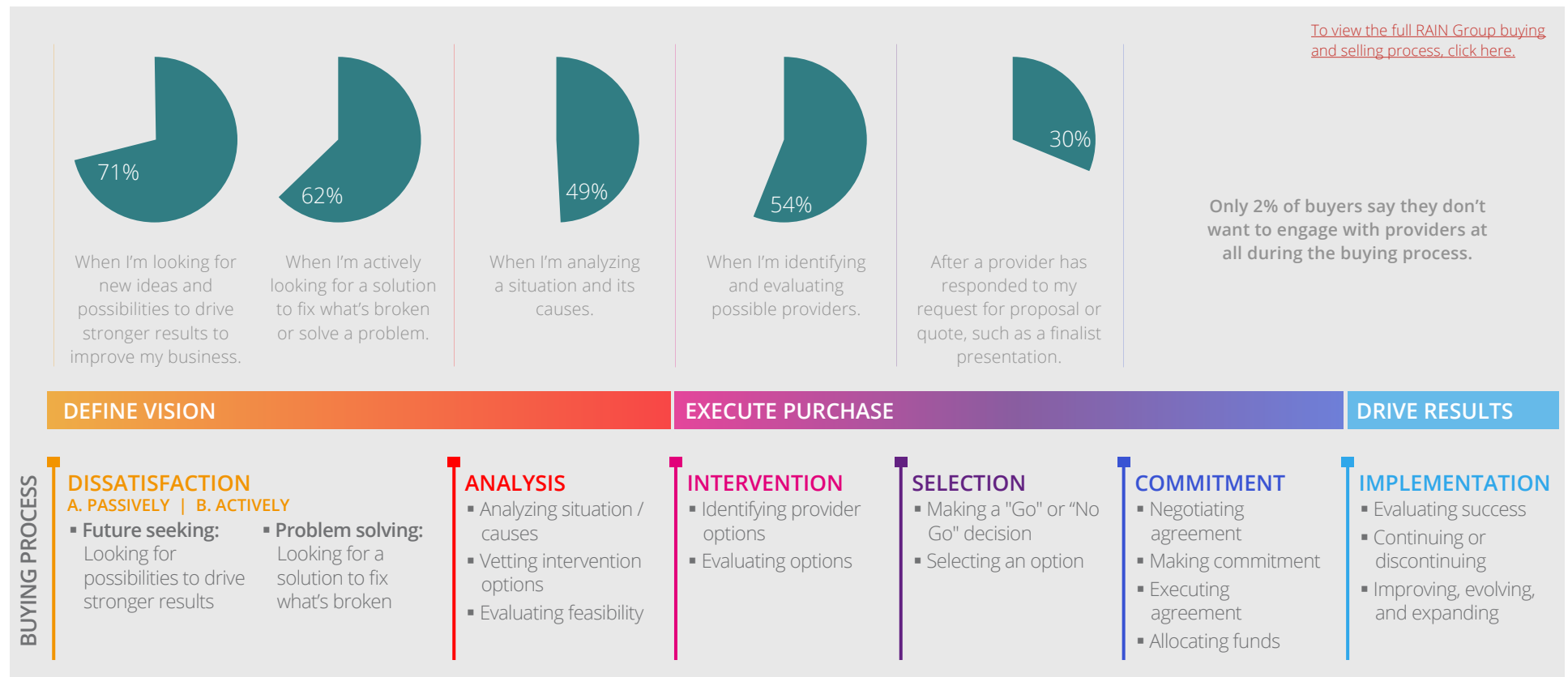
BUYERS DON'T WANT TO HEAR FROM SELLERS

Because of some research, such as from the Corporate Executive Board that 57% of the purchase decision is complete before a customer calls a supplier, and Sirius Decision's statistic that 67% of the buying journey is now done digitally, many sellers assume buyers don't want or need to talk to them early in the buying process.

They're dead wrong. Buyers want to hear from sellers and they want to hear from them early.

In fact, 82% of buyers accept meetings with sellers. These buyers want to meet sellers early in the buying process.

WHEN DO BUYERS WANT TO HEAR FROM SELLERS IN THE BUYING PROCESS?

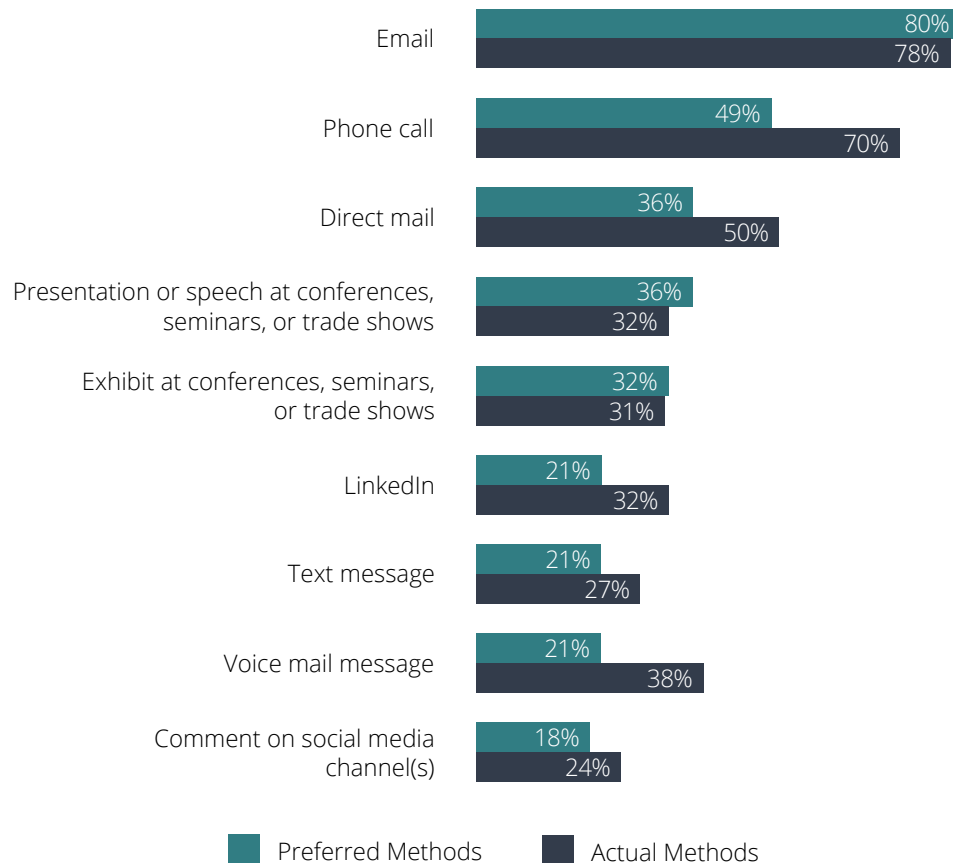


Takeaway: Sure, buyers do their own research now, but so what? Buyers want to hear from sellers, and hear from them early in the buying process.

MYTH 2

COLD CALLING IS DEAD

HOW DO BUYERS PREFER TO BE CONTACTED AND HOW DO BUYERS SAY SELLERS ACTUALLY CONNECT WITH THEM?



Takeaways: The common article title “COLD CALLING IS DEAD” gets a lot of clicks. Many sellers don’t want to cold call, so they want this to be true. It’s not. The phone is essential for prospecting, especially when you are selling to C-level and VP buyers.

According to buyers, 70% of sellers connect with them and generate meetings using the phone. This is second only to email.

Sellers who prospect agree the phone is essential, including cold calls.

According to sellers, of the 15 most effective outreach methods we studied, using the phone represents three of the top five statistics, including making phone calls to existing clients, past clients, and new contacts.

Both buyers and sellers agree: cold calling works and it’s still one of the most effective ways to generate initial sales conversations.

NOTE ABOUT CONTACTING TOP EXECUTIVE AND TECHNOLOGY BUYERS

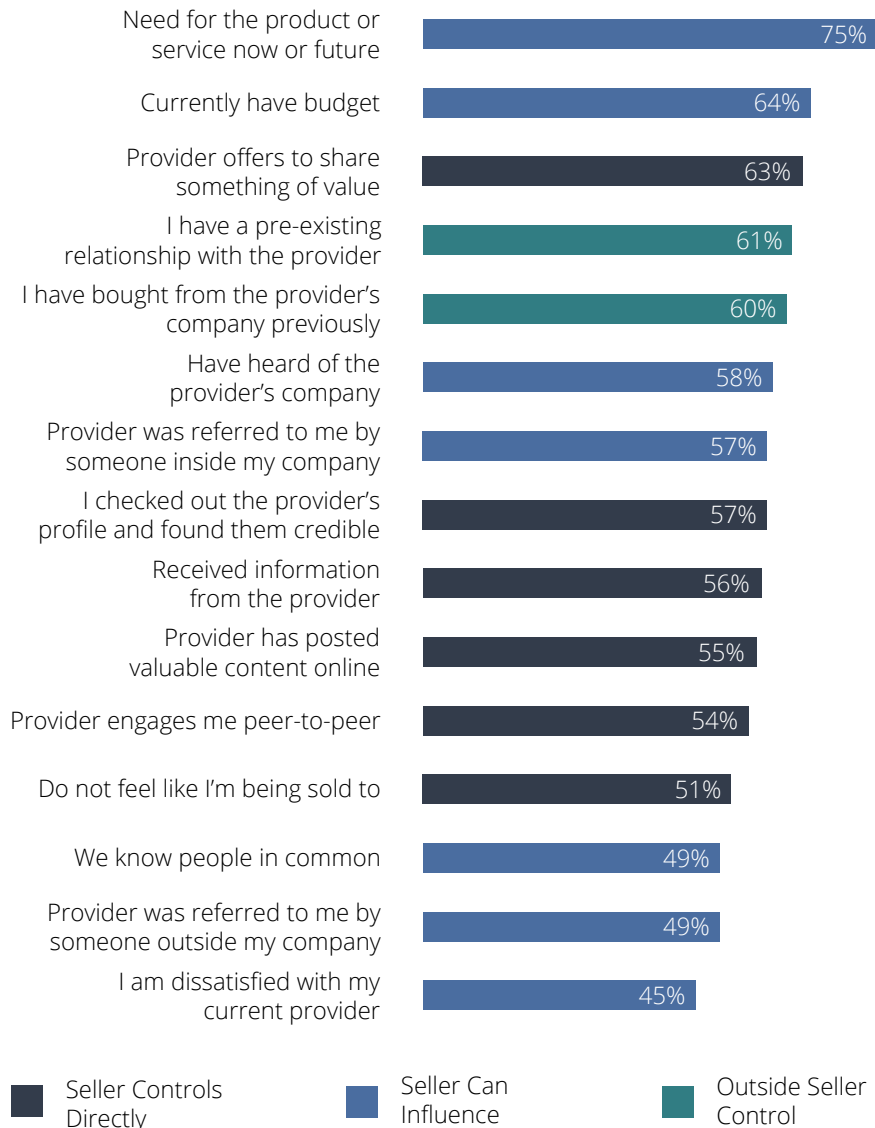
Tech sellers in particular tell us how it is impossible to get tech buyers on the phone. Interestingly, tech buyers prefer the telephone (54%) more than their peers in financial services (40%) and professional services (50%).

C-level and VP buyers across industries prefer the phone even more (57%) versus directors (51%) and managers (47%).

MYTH 3

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR SELLERS TO GET THROUGH

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE IF A BUYER CONNECTS WITH A SELLER



Sellers often complain it's impossible to get through. It's certainly not easy, but sellers who work at it get through. In fact, **82% of buyers say they accept meetings with sellers who reach out to them.** Furthermore, sellers control many of the factors that influence whether or not buyers open the door.

- **Need:** Buyers may not perceive the need for your offering, but they may want the results your offering can bring. Educate and inspire to connect their goals to what you offer.
- **Budget:** Buyers usually have no budget for new possibilities and unseen challenges. Senior-level buyers often never have budget; they invest when they see opportunity. Inspire with the opportunity you bring. Budgets will appear.
- **Heard of provider's company:** Don't leave this to marketing. Run multi-touch attraction campaigns and create your own awareness with your ideal buyers.
- **Provider referred to me:** Find contacts in the buyer's company and ask for referrals. Make new contacts and do the same. Get introduced through your connections and efforts.
- **We know people in common:** Make LinkedIn and relationship development an ongoing effort. If you do, connections in common will be inevitable.
- **Dissatisfied:** Buyers may not know they should be. Show them that better exists, and you will sow the seeds of dissatisfaction.

Takeaway: Sellers influence many of the factors that get buyers to open the door.

MYTH 4

BUYERS DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR CAPABILITIES

CONTENT THAT INFLUENCES BUYERS TO ACCEPT A MEETING OR OTHERWISE CONNECT



WHICH CONTENT INFLUENCES C-LEVEL AND VP BUYERS?

If you sell to the executive suite, focus on content 100% customized to their specific situation and financial justifications with strong return on investment (ROI) cases.

C-level and VP buyers are significantly more likely to be influenced to take a meeting, or otherwise connect, by ROI cases (75%) compared to directors (64%) and managers (59%). Same for 100% customized content written just for them: C-level and VP buyers (75%), directors (71%), and managers (63%).

Also, for buyers who accept meetings at least sometimes, customized content is an incredibly strong influence. 83% of those who accept meetings frequently, and 61% of those who accept meetings sometimes, are very/extremely influenced to do so by content that is 100% customized to them vs. 40% for those who rarely/never accept meetings.

According to buyers, insight and capabilities capture their attention. While many sellers are told not to pitch their capabilities, buyers want a combination of insight and knowing what you do.

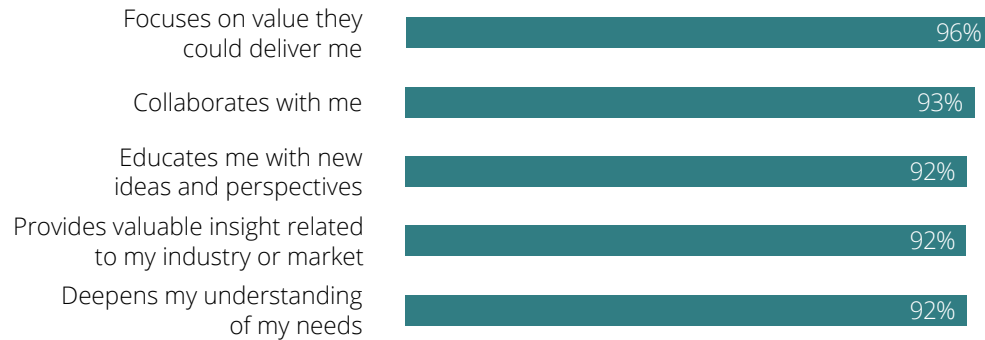
Contrary to popular thought, buyers do want to hear about your offerings and how they should use them, but they want an individual focus on their situations. Buyers also report being awash in information, but needing help sorting it out. If you can provide research and 100% customized content along with capabilities information, you will have a powerful content cocktail.

Takeaway: Just because buyers want valuable content doesn't mean they don't need to hear about your capabilities as well.

MYTH 5

COLD MEETINGS DON'T CONVERT TO SALES WINS

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BUYER PURCHASE DECISION (MODERATELY/VERY/EXTREMELY INFLUENTIAL)

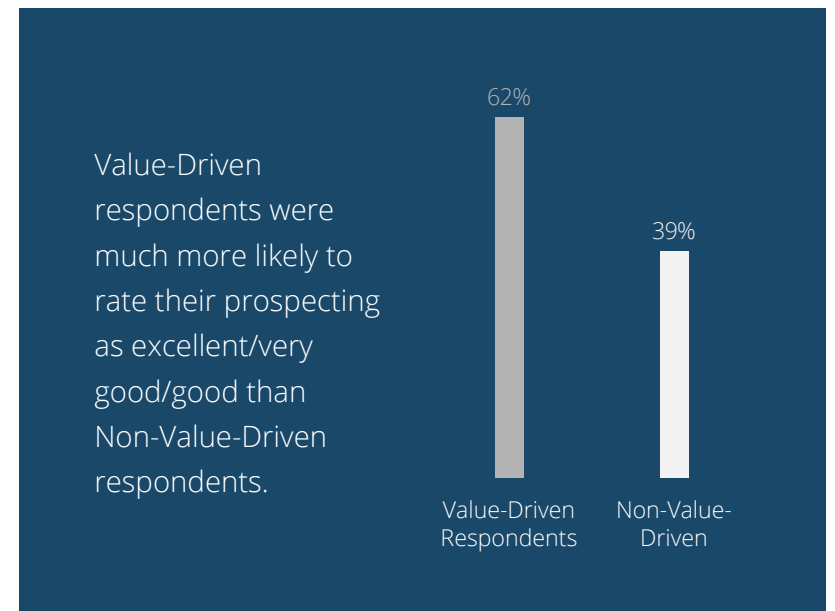


It's one thing to get meetings. It's another to generate sales wins. We wanted to know if factors the seller could control, regardless of their offering, influenced purchase decisions. It turns out yes, to an extraordinary extent.

If you want to get the meeting and eventually get the sale, focus on the value you can deliver to buyers, work with them collaboratively, and bring forward ideas that will make a difference for their business.

Value converts to sales, but sellers aren't delivering. Buyers say 58% of their sales meetings are not valuable. Bring the value and you'll generate strong results and sales wins.

Takeaway: If buyers see you as valuable, you'll get more initial meetings *and* convert more into sales wins.





CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Conventional wisdom sounds good, but it's not always true, and doesn't always serve you well. Prospecting is fraught with emotion. People want to believe certain things (e.g., cold calling is dead). Many pundits have a dog in the hunt of getting sellers to believe one thing or another so they can support their positions (e.g., buyers do all their research online and contact sellers late if at all).

At the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research, our goal is to find out what's actually happening. In doing so, we've learned some prospecting "truths" are, in fact, prospecting myths. It turns out:

1. Buyers want to hear from sellers early. However, it's sellers' fault that buyers find 58% of their meetings to be of no value.
2. Cold calling is not dead, it just has the company of other tactics.
3. Buyers do take meetings (82%), and sellers control much of what needs to happen to get on buyers' calendars.
4. Buyers may do research online, but they still want to hear about capabilities while receiving valuable insights from sellers.
5. When buyers find sellers valuable, sellers convert more initial meetings into eventual sales.

As you think about your own prospecting efforts, take these findings to heart. Leave the myths behind. You can break through to top executives, fill your pipeline, and win more sales.

71% OF BUYERS WANT TO SPEAK TO SELLERS DURING THE EARLY STAGES OF THE BUYING PROCESS. ARM YOUR SELLERS WITH THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO GET THROUGH.

RAIN SALES PROSPECTING: CREATING CONVERSATIONS WITH IDEAS AND INSIGHTS 2-DAY LIVE SALES TRAINING PROGRAM

Nothing has changed more in sales in the last decade than prospecting. It's more difficult than ever to get through and get meetings. Based on groundbreaking work from the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research, we know what works and what doesn't. If you want your team to achieve top performance in sales prospecting, this is the program for you.

In RAIN Sales Prospecting, your team will learn to:

- Develop a compelling value proposition and reason to get decision makers to accept a meeting
- Deliver the value proposition over the phone, email, and other methods to set appointments
- Work with gatekeepers to drive prospecting success
- Leverage the power of LinkedIn to build relationships
- Establish credibility, rapport, and trust early in the sales process
- Maximize seller motivation, energy, and focus for consistent prospecting productivity

If the sellers on your team have difficulty breaking through to difficult-to-reach executives, overcoming prospecting reluctance, or establishing themselves as valuable experts, RAIN Group's 2-day live training program will give them the tactics and tools they need to develop, manage, and sell to a robust pipeline.

COMPONENTS

Live Prospecting: Participants apply what they learn in real time to reach out to prospective buyers and generate meetings.

Prospecting Messaging: We work with you to develop the key messages most likely to resonate with your targets.

Attraction Campaigns: We work with you to develop and write multi-touch, multi-modal Attraction Campaigns for phone, mail, email, and social media to set appointments at a high rate.

Extreme Prospecting Productivity: Our Extreme Productivity approach to prospecting helps your sellers stay focused and obsessed on generating prospecting results.

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RAIN GROUP IS A GLOBAL SALES TRAINING AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMPANY THAT UNLEASHES SALES POTENTIAL BY DELIVERING TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR OUR CLIENTS.

We help organizations:

- Develop and improve sales strategy, process, messaging, and talent
- Enhance sales capability through world-class sales education
- Design and execute strategic account management initiatives
- Increase effectiveness of sales management and coaching

Named a Top 20 Sales Training Company globally by Selling Power, RAIN Group has helped hundreds of thousands of professionals, managers, and sales leaders significantly increase their sales results. Headquartered in Boston, we have offices across the U.S. and internationally in Bogotá, Geneva, Johannesburg, London, Mumbai, Sydney, and Toronto.

BEST INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

We study buying and selling relentlessly through the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research. Our research and field work allows us to create industry-leading intellectual property to help our clients achieve the greatest success.

BEST EDUCATION SYSTEM

We strive to use the best education approaches, methods, and technologies to make training work, stick, and transfer to the job.

BEST RESULTS

We make it our mission to drive value and achieve high client satisfaction through excellence in quality and producing transformational results for our clients.

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