Model Distribution Training Best Practices: Research & Data Points

Independent Manufacturers Rep Council

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Electronic Components Industry Association

ECIA Independent Manufacturers Rep Council

Thank you to the Council Member Participants

- Alan Ahern – Crowley Associates
- Dean Akiyama – AKI GIBB
- Doug Canterbury – Luscombe Engineering
- Mark Conley - O'Donnell Associates North
- Cameron English – English Technical Sales
- Tom Griffin – Catalyst Unity Sales
- Adam Grigor – Tech Trek
- Scott Jones – AEM Group
- Robert Logan – Kruvand Associates
- Mike Longano – Millennium Alliance
- Robert Murillo – Spectrum Marketing Assoc.
- Mike Swenson – Mel Foster Company

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ECIA Independent Manufacturers Rep Council Initiative

The ECIA Independent Manufacturers Rep Council conducted extensive surveys of North American based distributors to identify the BEST PRACTICES used by manufacturers and their local representatives in the training of distributor personnel.

Over 1,000 individuals were surveyed over a 5-month period.

The following information shows the research and data points used to create the ECIA Model Distribution Training Practices

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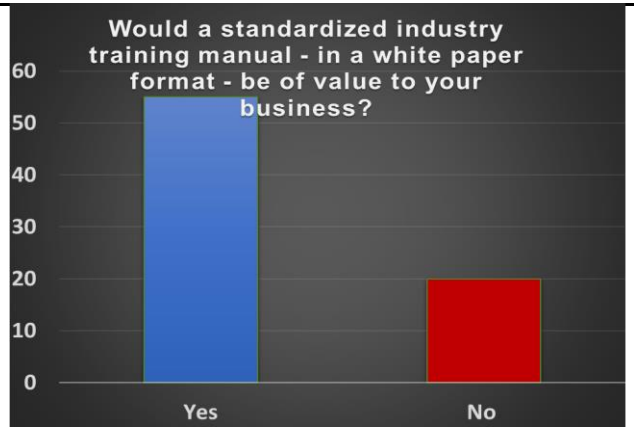
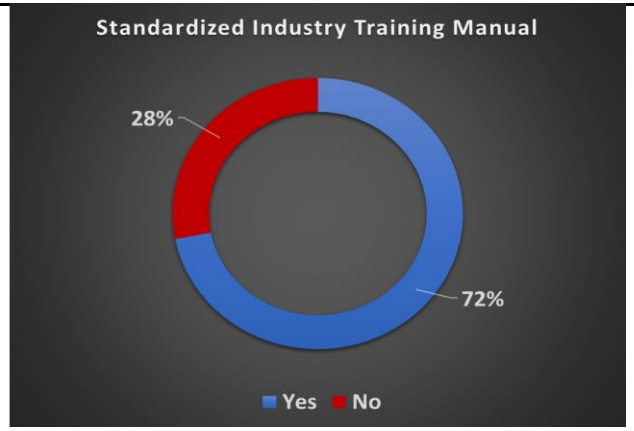
2019 Rep Training Survey

Would a standardized industry training manual - in a white paper format - be of value to your business? It would be designed to be used across multiple suppliers and reps.

Answer	Responses	
Yes	76%	55
No	24%	20
	Total	72





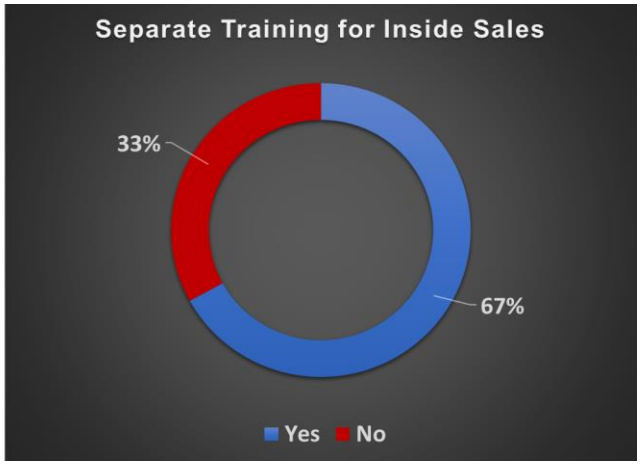
Responses

I take the request to be baseline or foundation training about the industry
The more expert IP and tribal knowledge and wisdom we can memorialize and turn into shareable knowledge we create, the more relevant and valuable we all become
I may not fully implement it but if the suppliers and Reps did better training to the Distributors FSRs and inside them that would be good.
It sounds interesting
Field training need to be tailored to fit the various audience level of expertise and knowledge. If the manual could accomplish this it would be valuable
It put competitors on a level playing field while at the same time the one who best utilized it will have differentiation
It would hone in on interaction with the sales teams and the customers the product is being trained on would apply.
Driving home the need for focus products specific to market needs to be considered in this initiative.

2019 Rep Training Survey

Should separate training be conducted for Inside Sales?

Answer	Responses	
Yes	67%	47
No	33%	23
	Total	70

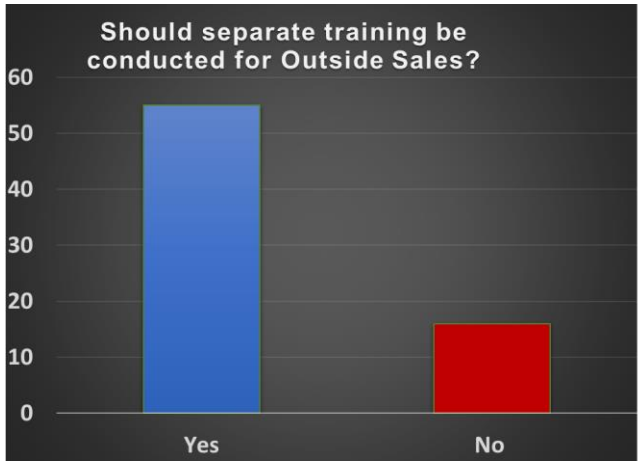


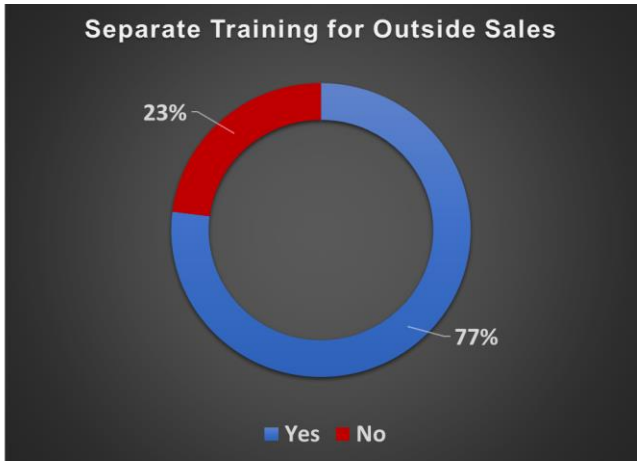
What are important attributes to include training for Inside Sales?
What questions to ask the customers they support about potential opportunities.
Cheat sheets high level overview
Synergistic (Associated Selling)
Definition of industry and the buzz words
How to identify new opportunities (applications).
Competitive landscape.
Who to call and where to go to with customer requirement questions.
New technologies to interest the customer.
Which product is design registerable.

2019 Rep Training Survey

Should separate training be conducted for Outside Sales?

Answer	Responses	
Yes	77%	55
No	23%	16
	Total	71





What are important attributes to include training for Outside Sales?
How to make the most impact when interfacing with the customer.
Develop best practices for buddy calls.
Importance of tracking as business moves from OEM to CM and how the Rep or supplier can inform of the location.
What are registerable?
Understanding good use of company time and ROI.
How to schedule a day/week/month to make efficient use of time.
Circuit component recognition & associated selling.
How to get the attention of an engineer in the digital age.
Which engineer is responsible for designing in each particular component.
What sales tools are available for the product being trained on.
Where do I find the product on the suppliers web site?

2019 Rep Training Survey

Should separate training be conducted for FAE's?

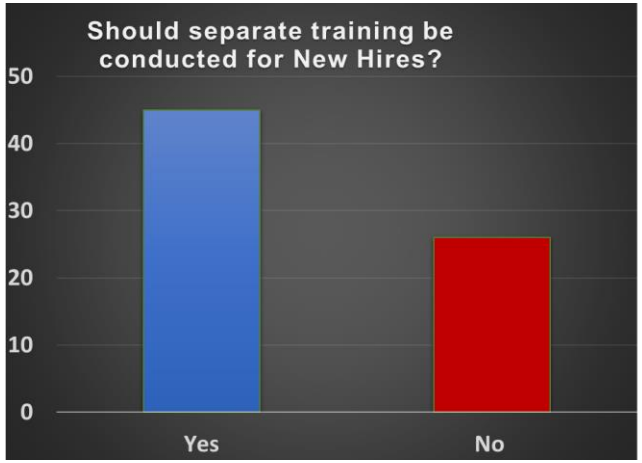
Answer	Responses	
Yes	60%	42
No	40%	28
	Total	70

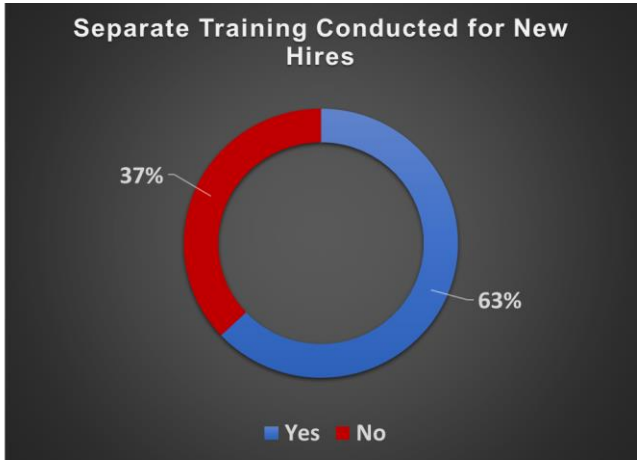
What are important attributes to include training for FAE's?
Product knowledge and design support along with the latest product trends..
Most important is to include roadmaps and products that are groundbreaking or revolutionary.
Technical aspects of the product and applications.
Technical as opposite to market information.
Clear roadmap of product not suggested for new design.
One size does not fit all for products. Content coordination with FAE group prior to training suggested.
Design kits and software development information.
Design registerable/price protection products.
Anticipated customer concerns during development or field test conditions.
Product superiority over other suppliers of like kind product.
Factory support
More technical, touching basic overview of each category FAE's understanding sales role to work together
Similar to Field Sales with a focus on how to engage with customer engineering teams.
Rep and FAE interaction distinct roles while interfacing with customers.
Supplier targeted customer identification.

2019 Rep Training Survey

Should separate training be conducted for New Hires?

Answer	Responses	
Yes	63%	45
No	37%	26
	Total	71



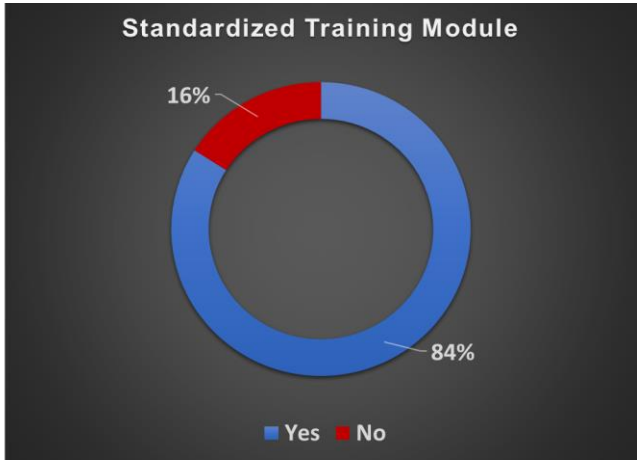


What are important attributes to include training for New Hires?
Overall basics of understanding industry.
Value stream map of how products and services moves thru the organization. Much easier to solve issues when you understand flow.
Product knowledge and understanding.
Product and services overview, target markets and applications.
Everything but the kitchen sink.
If the end product looks like this then they should suggest XYZ types of products.
Recognizing what products to look for when in the field.
If the person is new to the industry, define what an independent Rep does. Clear roles of both Rep and Distributor.
General industry background, trends and potential.
Factory support.
Links to all on-line training modules.
Marketing materials and how to use sample kits to generate customer interest.
Understand how a supplier is positioned with that distributor such as inventory preferred supplier etc.

2019 Rep Training Survey

Would you support a standardized training model that includes: a pre-training agenda, training sent in advance and post-training minutes?

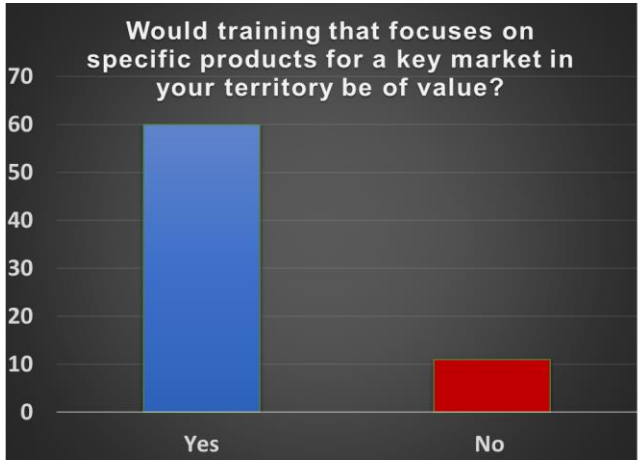
Answer	Responses	
Yes	84%	58
No	16%	11
	Total	69



2019 Rep Training Survey

Would training that focuses on specific products for a key market in your territory be of value?

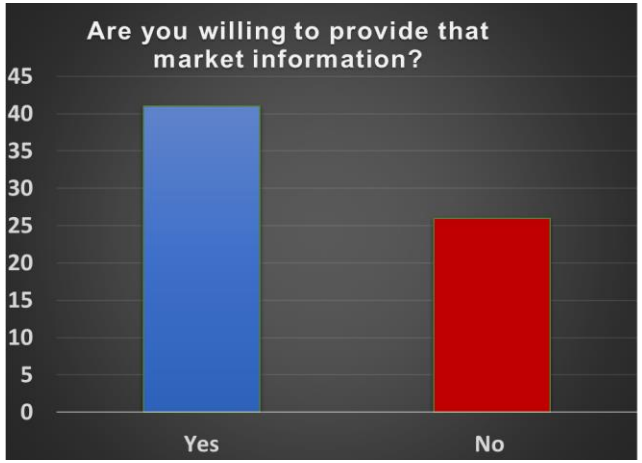
Answer	Responses	
Yes	85%	60
No	15%	11
	Total	71

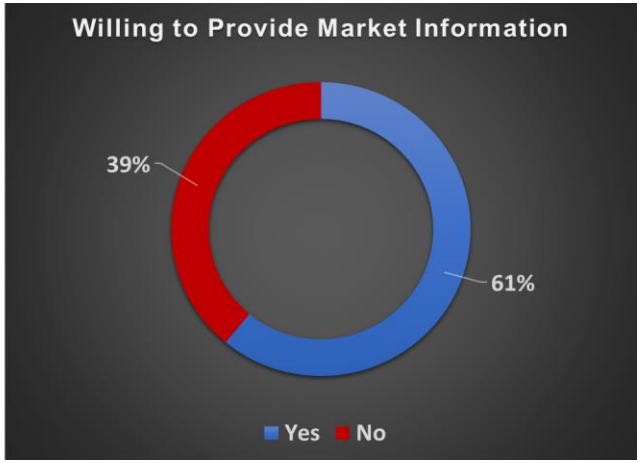


2019 Rep Training Survey

Are you willing to provide that market information?

Answer	Responses	
Yes	61%	41
No	39%	26
	Total	67





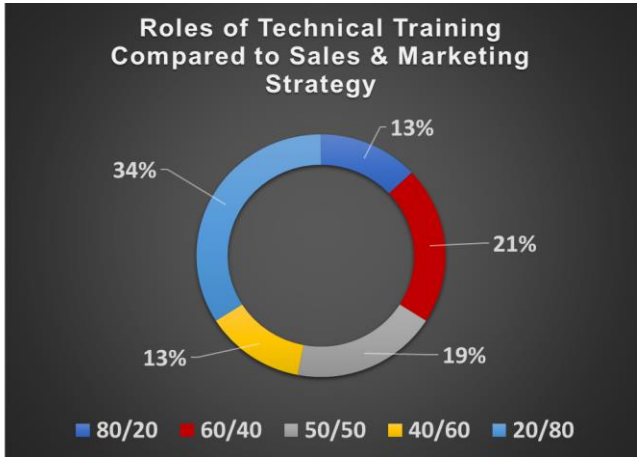
2019 Rep Training Survey	
What are the top three elements of the most effective, "Best in Class" training?	
Technical	Product Roadmaps
Being clear and concise	Provide collateral material
Training aligned with marketplace location	Keep the level of technical portion limited
Target list developed after training with actions	Summarize at the end what was trained
Understand the audience and adjust accordingly	Do not try to fit to much in one training session
Sales techniques for the products	Quiz at the end and review answers that were incorrect
Competitive advantages	Ongoing not once and done
Train and joint travel	Process for price, samples, support
Case studies	Company procedures for products
How to reply to customers request on products	Etiquette
Keep it crisp and concise	Counterfeiting risks
New product introductions	Tell them where to sell
How to price with good margins	Focus on design registerable products
Balance of sales focus versus technical	How to get the customer interested in a meeting
Pictorial block diagram	Application material
Open book testing with explanation of why it was chosen	Role play scenarios
Adjacent product sold for a lead in	

2019 Rep Training Survey	
What elements of training should be avoided?	
Organizational Charts	Too many slides & technical aspect of products
Trainings where you just mention what lines you have and nothing new about them	Reading from slides
Pictures of videos of suppliers buildings	Nowhere to sell the product to
Corporate videos	Death by PowerPoint. Make the trainings engaging event with the trainees
Sales and global footprint	Bit's and bytes, low RDS on for example
Trainings that exceed reasonable timeframes	Product overviews that do not fit local market
Training specific to the audience	Non-registerable product or technology not prevalent in the market
Excessive technical specifications	Long presentations that cause boredom-no laptops or cell phone use during training
Too many products trained on	Long drawn-out power point presentations
Products not relative to the marketplace of the trainees	Slides with company history, plant locations and sales numbers
Legal contracts	Training to check a box, only going over line card bringing no value to the time allotted
Pricing	Proprietary information
Business strategy details formed around competitors	Excluding FAE's for technical training
Lecture style with no follow through or accountability	Business strategy details formed around competitors

2019 Rep Training Survey

In a training session, what is a good ratio of technical training as compared to sales & marketing strategy?

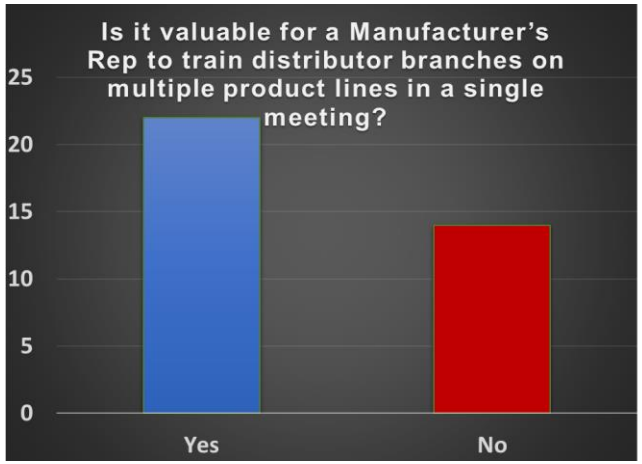
Answer	Responses	
80/20	13%	5
60/40	21%	8
50/50	19%	7
40/60	13%	5
20/80	34%	13
	Total	38

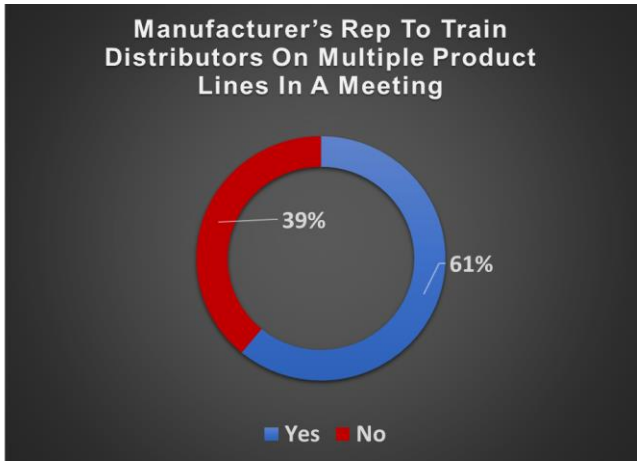


2019 Rep Training Survey

Is it valuable for a Manufacturer's Rep to train distributor branches on multiple product lines in a single meeting?

Answer	Responses	
Yes	61%	22
No	39%	14
	Total	36

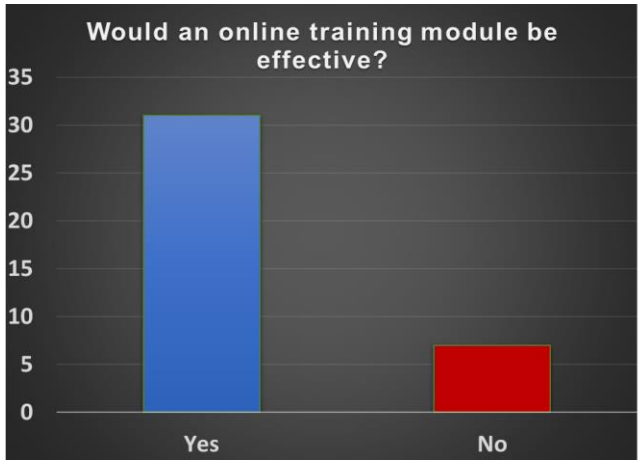


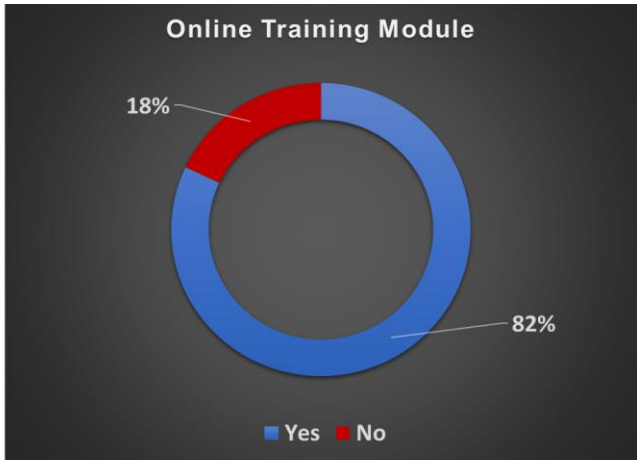


2019 Rep Training Survey

Would an online training module be effective?

Answer	Responses	
Yes	82%	31
No	18%	7
	Total	38





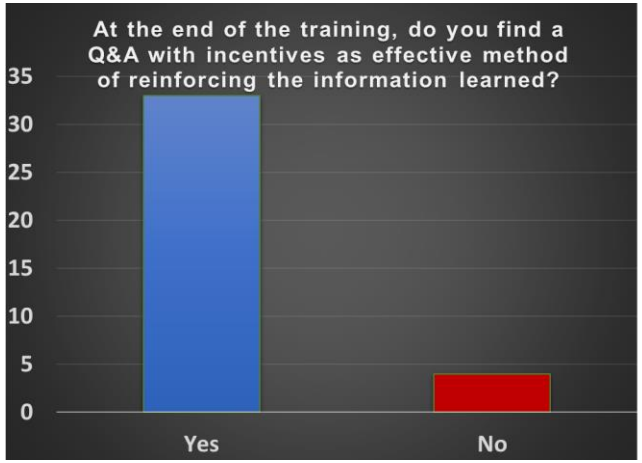
2019 Rep Training Survey		
What are Three Benefits of an Online training module?		
Reviewable/updatable	Larger potential number of participants	On demand (time management)
Reach remote offices	Take it on trainee's time	Schedule flexibility to include remote staff
Go at your own pace	Better consistency	Can offer more than one-time option for convenience
Cost effective	Supplier prepared	Knowledge of what is available
Expediency	Can be done when schedule allows	Saves on travel expenses
Time off the road is minimized	Can train multiple branches at one time	Know where to get info when needed
Flexibility of individual schedule	Easily documented and added to	Daytime flexible as many times multiple sessions are offered
Consistent content and message	Larger potential of participants it can reach	Can be viewed from anywhere
Learnings verified	Can be stopped and started as needed	Pick and choose the training needed
Can be done at anytime	Ability to refer back to information without disrupting a live training session	For those that can't attend the in-person training

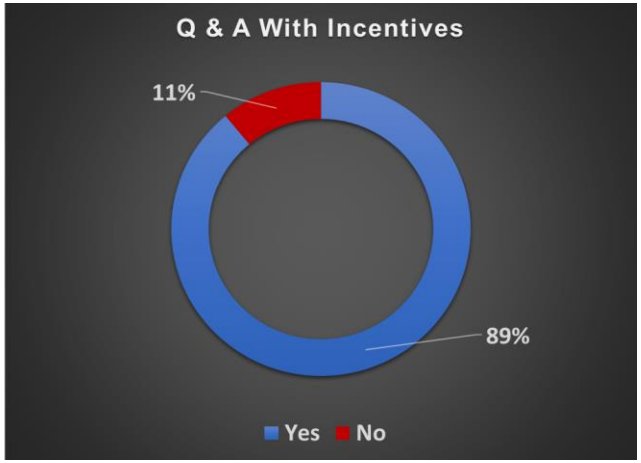
2019 Rep Training Survey		
What are Three concerns you have regarding an online training module?		
Should there be Q/A?	Portal or software download requirements to view training	Knowledge retention
Participation	Can't have innumerable sessions	See no benefit and rarely allow them here
Inability to stop and ask questions for understanding	Live feedback from the viewers which can change the direction of the presentation	Fear of asking questions in this format
	Access	Needs to be a way to confirm it was done
Too lengthy	May not apply to a particular region's customer base	Strenuous
Maybe not have full attention of audience	Material presented doesn't match audience skill set	Needs to be finite
Limited to no interaction for questions	Make it dynamic enough to allow for people who read/process differently or more slowly	Building rapport
Being more than 15-20 minutes per session	How to track one's own progress within the training	Sales will not normally be engaged as they have set them time aside to train and do not want it to be robotic
Lack of immediate response to questions	Not as memorable as in person show and tell type of training	Time commitment and pressure to complete
Too generic	Consistence	Quality of the call(background noise, presentation material lagging
People wont take the time to do them	Potential connectivity issues	Online tool is difficult to use/log into (performance)
Lack of factory support	On point for our business	FSR's won't get to it or prioritize the time available
How to avoid Q/A interaction becoming burdensome to the trainer	Some people need hands on and or interactive training to retain information	It must be part of multiple training approaches and tools, not just be the only training as people learn differently
Person to person interaction	Not specific to a certain market or tailored towards a specific market so the online training may not at all apply to a participant on the call	Lack of focus

2019 Rep Training Survey

At the end of the training, do you find a Q&A format with incentives an effective method of reinforcing the information learned?

Answer	Responses	
Yes	89%	33
No	11%	4
	Total	37



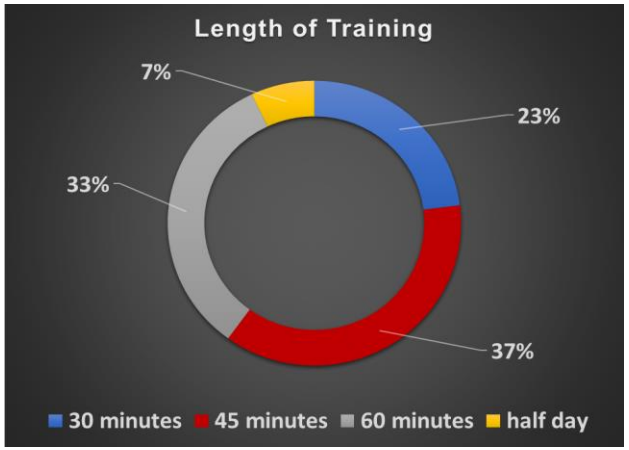


2019 Rep Training Survey		
Please list up to three strategies that are most helpful when delivered after the training is completed.		
"Cheat sheet" of summaries	People contact info to call if questions arise or chat room	Associated Sell Sheets
Links	Access to current info	Pictures with size comparisons of various components
Sample kits	Cross reference	Market information
Applications Catalog or 1 page reference sheet	Additional information or video demonstration links	Action items or follow up steps
Copy of presentations	Discussion of target account to work together	Block diagrams
Interactive quiz with presentation reference link	Develop individualized plans targeting specific customers	Scheduling a follow up session
Anything hands on with respect to products presented	Questions and discussions over the incorrect ones	Certificates, rewards
Market pricing	Data sheets	Target accounts to go see after the training
Copy of right answers to every question as well as the incorrect answers so they connect the dots	One sheet product overview for the training even if multiple products	Web site navigation expertise
Selector guides	Online tools	Demo if possible
One sheet covering all material	Demo kits	Development kits
scheduling joint calls with the FSRs	One page sell sheets	Buddy calls at target accounts
New collateral available	Links and overview of website and how to use	Customer leads
Discussion of customers in market and potential for technology presented.	Follow up breakfast meeting with individual FSRs to plan joint strategy.	Role Play

2019 Rep Training Survey

What is the Ideal Length of Training for your Team?

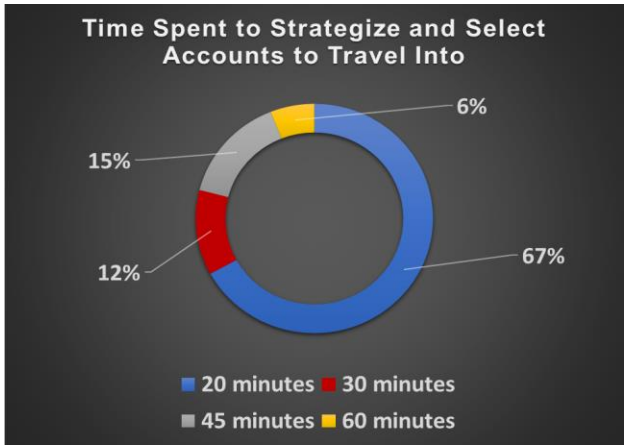
Answer	Responses	
30 minutes	23%	7
45 minutes	37%	11
60 minutes	33%	10
half day	7%	2
	Total	30



2019 Rep Training Survey

Of that amount of time, what percentage should be spent to strategize and select account to travel into?

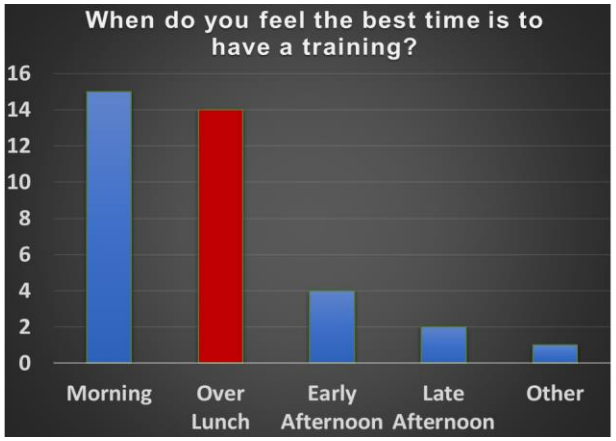
Answer	Responses	
20 minutes	67%	22
30 minutes	12%	4
45 minutes	15%	5
60 minutes	6%	2
90 minutes	0%	0
	Total	33

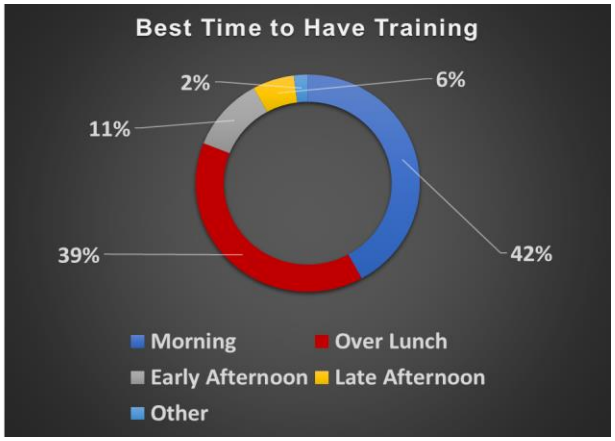


2019 Rep Training Survey

When do you feel the best time is to have a training?

Answer	Responses	
Morning	42%	15
Lunch	39%	14
Early afternoon	11%	4
Late afternoon	6%	2
Other	2%	1
	Total	36

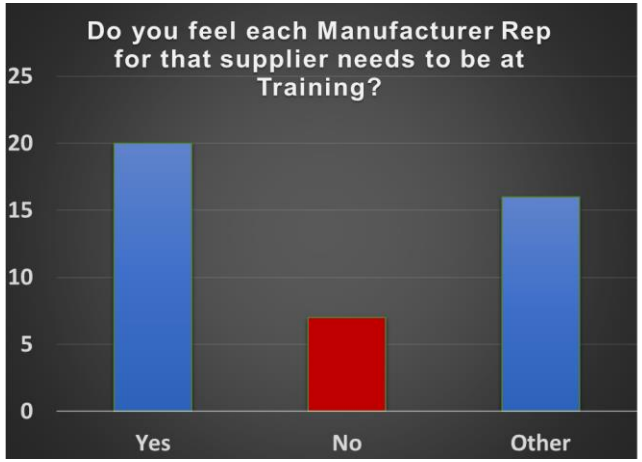


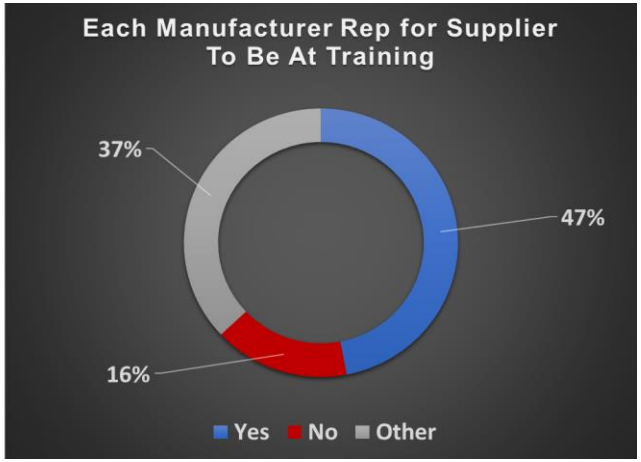


2019 Rep Training Survey

Do you feel each Manufacturer Rep for that supplier needs to be there or just the technical team?

Answer	Responses	
Yes	47%	20
No	16%	7
Other	37%	16
	Total	43



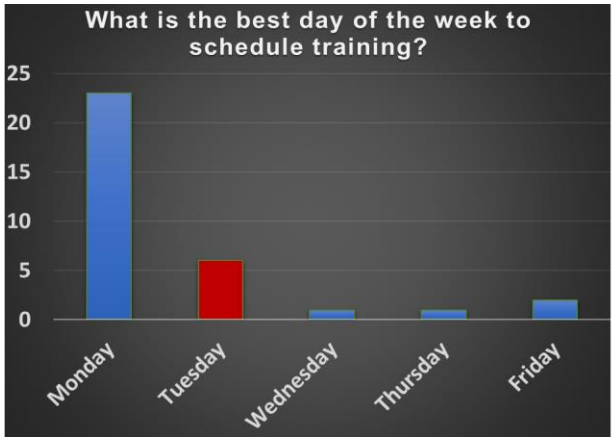


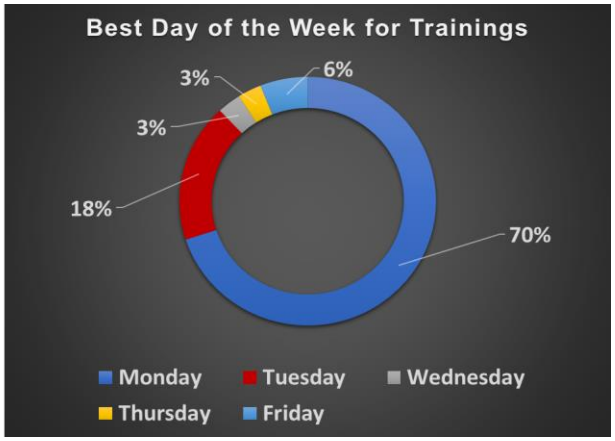
2019 Rep Training Survey		
What three things determine if a supplier is considered in your company's training schedule?		
Able to track outside of NA	That we are authorized	Potential in our target markets
Innovative products	Will they give timely support	Quality of their training in the past
Length of time with the line	Top supplier corporate or regional	Willingness to work with distribution
Mind share	Quality of the past interactions if a repeat supplier	For Rep the manufacturers they represent
Size of line	Market potential	If the supplier provides leads and opportunities
Customer demand for product line	Current/future revenue opp	Committed to any follow up
Relevance of the product presented	WW franchise	Registration program
Total dollars we sell in a line	Perceived weakness in tech knowledge of our sales staff	Profit potential
Registerable product/protected pricing product	Relevance to customer base	Real desire to show support for the supplier's marketing drive
Effectiveness of trainings	Overall sales performance of the line	Past joint design wins
Number of line on your line card	DTAM opportunities	Complexity of the product
Company mandated	Relationship with supplier and reps	Knowledge of that supplier
Target market strategy	Length of session	Preparedness and value to the sales team
Relationship and what the supplier can offer to help grow the business as a partnership	Top 20 focus supplier	First in class materials
if the supplier will protect us on leads we bring	Historically does great trainings with great interaction	Supplier focus with rep team
Focus product that have an advantage over competition	NPI launch	Availability of FAE and support
Ability to identify and commit to seeing customers post training	Strong Registration Program	Engaged on an ongoing basis
Alignment of lines to corporate initiatives	New Manufacture Line to our Solutions	Partnering with Disti in market to collective drive the products
Amount of business we do with that company	Not over distributed	

2019 Rep Training Survey

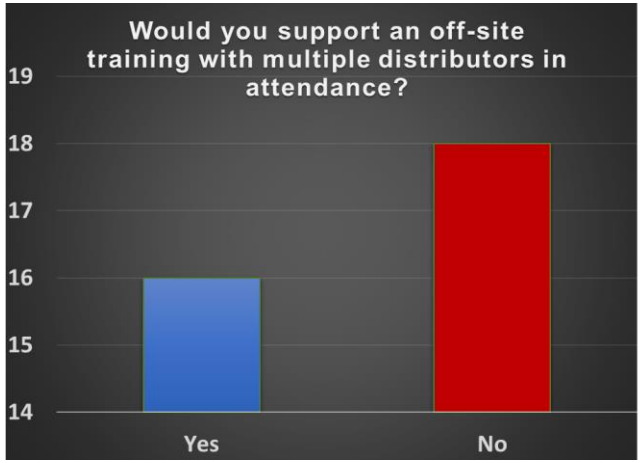
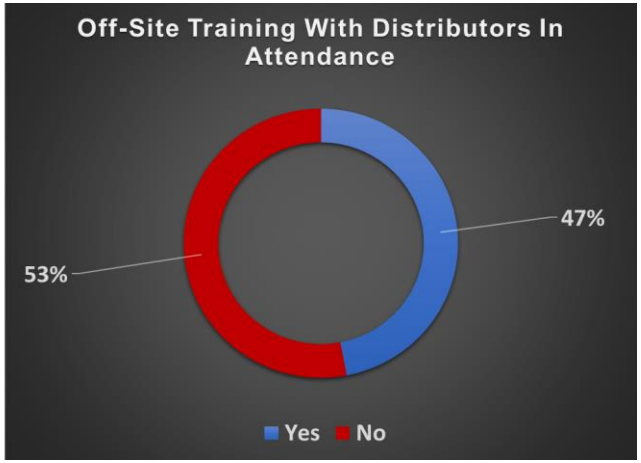
What is the best day of the week to schedule training?

Answer	Responses	
Monday	70%	23
Tuesday	18%	6
Wednesday	3%	1
Thursday	3%	1
Friday	6%	2
	Total	33





2019 Rep Training Survey

Would you support an off-site training with multiple distributors in attendance?

Answer	Responses	
Yes	53%	16
No	47%	18
	Total	34