



A Guide to Group Coaching for Sales Leaders

Pro tips for successfully
implementing group sales coaching
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An ebook by Jiminny
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A valuable tool in a sales leader's toolkit

A team of quota-carrying customer success managers (CSMs) were facing increased pressure to prove their value to the business. Their task was booking meetings with high-value existing customers aimed at creating cross-selling and up-selling opportunities. At that point the team had booked 12 meetings, which wasn't enough.

To improve performance, the team leader worked with Jiminny to implement a group coaching program. The team met weekly by web conference. Everyone huddled up to provide a rotating team member specific feedback on a recorded outreach call aimed at booking these meetings.

The program was a huge success! It created a safe environment for team members struggling with an obstacle to get help from their peers, fostered knowledge sharing, and facilitated a shared experience that bought new energy to the team. In less than a month after implementing the group coaching program, they had – woot! woot! – more than doubled the meetings booked to 27.

As one CSM remarked, the group coaching session focused on one of her call recordings allowed her to make changes to her approach right away. And she landed more meetings that way!

Group coaching is a valuable tool in a sales leader's tool kit. This guide will define group coaching, recommend a process for facilitating group coaching sessions, and offer tips from real sales leaders that have implemented successful group coaching programs.

What is group coaching?

Group coaching is a formal (but fun) coaching program where a team comes together to share feedback on a single sales call recording to which they've all listened. Typically, the recording is nominated by an individual contributor – the coachee – who is seeking help developing a certain sales skill or overcoming a specific challenge they're having.

Team members can listen to the call recording at their convenience and prepare feedback to offer during a structured group coaching session. That session is facilitated by an experienced sales leader, who helps keep the session moving in a positive direction.

The feedback teams provide should center around the specific goal the coachee has mentioned. Some examples of goals a coachee might put forward include:

- improving sales discovery
- structuring sales calls optimally
- driving prospect or customer interaction on calls
- reviewing a call that simply didn't go well
- positioning against competition
- dealing with sales objections

Goals for individual calls will vary based on the experience level of the coachee. Up-and-coming sales contributors often have high-level and broad goals for their coaching sessions. The more seasoned sales professionals usually ask for granular feedback around specific points.

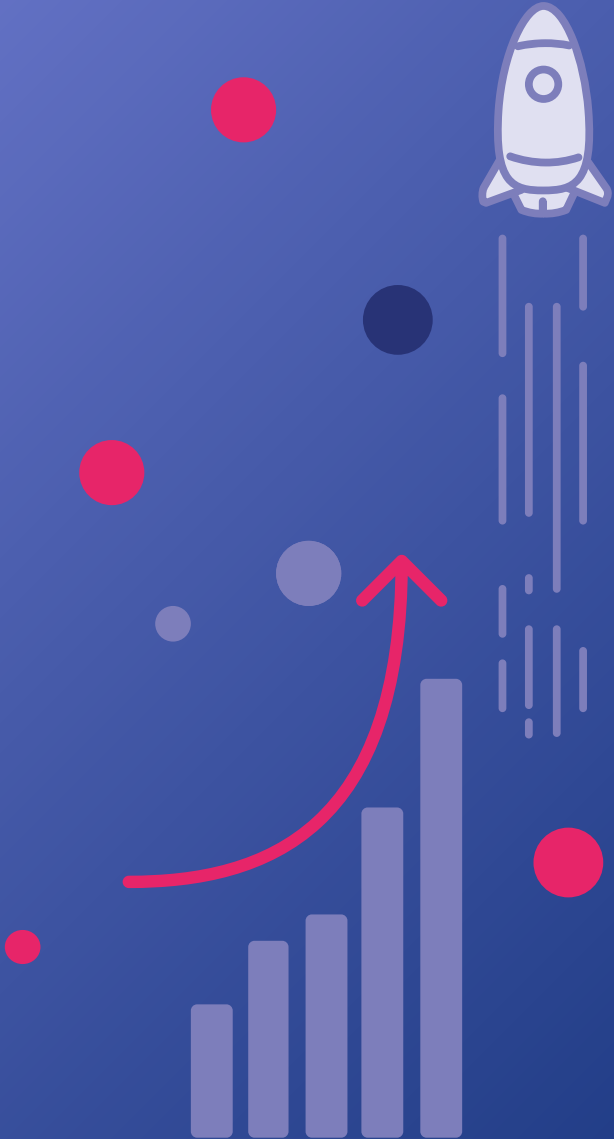
Group coaching in practice

B2B technology company Evermed is a model example of group coaching in action. Every week the sales team collectively chooses one recording of a sales discovery call to review.

Next, they listen to the call together and constructively analyze what went well and what could be improved. They also stretch their minds and strive to identify new ideas that can be tested in the future. When you really think about it, there's a lot of fun to be had in teaming up to solve problems this way.

Ilija Djukic, who was leading sales and marketing operations when the program was established, says team coaching allowed the entire sales organization to learn from each other, enabling the business to train and scale its sales organization faster.

One other outcome of team coaching is that the program has helped ingrain coaching in the culture. This has fostered an atmosphere of continuous improvement and helps the sales team stay in tune with the market.



Key benefits of group coaching

Thanks to some of our previous research, we know that coaching yields some pretty incredible results. For example, merely listening back to sales call recordings for just 3-4 hours per month can improve an individual sales representative's win-rate by 5.5%. Multiply that percentage again across the entire sales force, and suddenly that little improvement adds up to a big difference in revenue.

Group coaching helps teams take this to the next level. It provides new motivation for sales teams to listen to call recordings, and brings unique benefits:

- helps leaders identify strengths and weaknesses in their team
- fosters a culture of coaching and knowledge sharing
- cultivates a supportive workplace that improves resiliency and employee retention
- allows sales leaders new opportunities to build relationships with their team
- frees up time for sales leaders by delegating coaching tasks to subordinate managers
- enables sales leaders to develop leadership skills among subordinates
- creates a shared experience that brings teams together
- facilitates continuous professional development after onboarding

Group coaching isn't a replacement for other types of coaching, such as self-, peer- and leader-led coaching. Instead, it complements those programs, and generally, all these different types of coaching formats work better when they are working together.

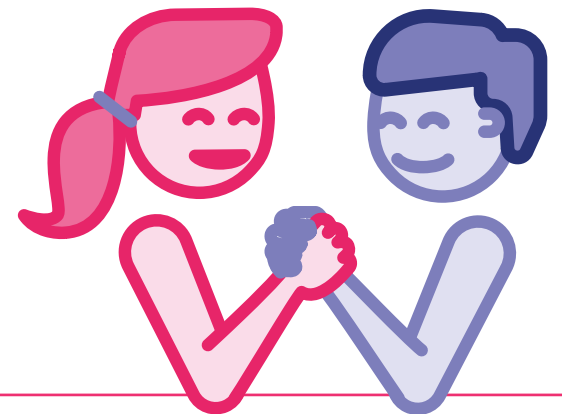
Mental health and group coaching

Sales has always been a tough gig. Add to it the massive change we've seen in the workplace, a global pandemic, and the uncertain economic outlook and the pressure can feel overwhelming. So it's no surprise that about half (48%) of respondents to a survey we commissioned of B2B sales representatives said the role of sales is harder compared to pre-pandemic times.

Such pressure can weigh on a person's mental health, especially for those holding leadership positions. In fact, "managing my stress or mental health" was the top challenge facing sales leaders in that same survey. By contrast "staying motivated" was the top challenge for sales team members, which could also be argued as being linked to mental health as well.

Group coaching can lighten some of the stress on sales leaders because it draws on the lessons and experiences of other contributors on their team: they don't have to be the only person with all the answers, which is a heavy burden to bear.

The role of a leader is, in many ways, to inspire their teams and help them overcome obstacles. Yet sales organizations need to remember their sales leaders need support to conquer their biggest challenges as well. An effective group coaching program can go a long way to do that!





Caveat: a safe environment for learning and sharing is crucial

Group coaching is designed to build skills, knowledge and confidence among team members. To that end, it's crucial that sales leaders set the right tone for group coaching. This means coaching sessions must be a safe place to ask for help without being judged, graded or embarrassed. It ought to be fun too: something people look forward to.

Why? If the sessions turn critical, then people will hesitate, or worse, avoid participating.

There is an added benefit here: the tone that is set for these sessions will spillover into day-to-day activities. This is how sales leaders can build a culture of coaching – a pillar of high-performing teams.

Recommended structure for group coaching sessions

Jiminy has helped lots of sales leaders run group coaching sessions. It has led us to refine how these sessions are structured. We recommend group coaching be scheduled as an hour-long session that revolves around the following steps:

Step 1 Nominate a coaching call

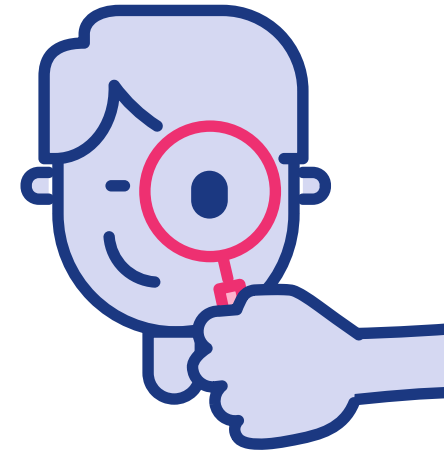
The first step is to nominate a call for review – and share a recording with all team members that will be part of the group coaching session. We find self-nominations work better than a roster because it allows team members to get help when they need it the most.

Step 2 Listen to the call recording

All team members must listen to the designated call ahead of the scheduled group coaching session. They should come with feedback aimed at the goals the coachee identified – along with a few of the positive aspects – things they think the coachee did well and should celebrate.

Step 3 Run the coaching session

All team members meet at the designated time and location for the group coaching session – in-person or online. The sales leader runs the conversation and keeps it on track. They begin by reiterating the goals for the session and reminding attendees of the ground rules (we offer example ground rules a bit later).



Step 4

Present specific feedback

The coach, or facilitator, then calls on each team member one at a time to present their feedback around the specified goal. Feedback should be delivered constructively. Leaders running calls also need to be sure feedback is clear – and ask for clarity when necessary.

Examples questions and comments that can help are:

- Can you tell us more about that?
- What do you mean when you say _____?
- Can you provide an example?

Step 5

Present celebrations

Once the specific feedback has been provided, go around the room and call on each team member once more. This time the purpose is to provide celebrations – that is to vocalize some of the positive observations about the call. This is crucial to group coaching success because sales leaders need team members to feel good about their participation.

Step 6

Review learnings

With all the feedback in hand, the facilitator now turns the session over to the coachee. This is their chance to repeat back to the group what they've learned and how they'll use the feedback moving forward.

Some questions sales leaders can use to guide the conversation include:

- What ideas stood out to you from the feedback?
- What feedback do you feel ready to act upon?
- What is the best part about that idea?
- Have you tried anything like that before?
- Are there any obstacles in your way?
- What support do you think you'll need?

Step 7

Team takeaways

Even though these sessions are focused on one person, everyone can take something away that they learned. Each team member will identify at least one takeaway from the group coaching session they can use to improve their own performance. This final step is a good way to finish these sessions on a high note.

Pro tips for implementing group coaching

We've worked with many sales leaders to run group coaching programs and here are some best practices we've learned along the way:

1 Keep the focus on learning

One of the motivations to implement a group coaching program is to improve sales performance. It's a good goal but individual sessions should not be centered around sales outcomes. In other words, don't grade the coachee's performance in any way. Doing so will make it into a negative experience that the team avoids rather than embraces.

Keep group coaching focused on learning. It must be a safe environment where identifying a mistake is a positive characteristic because it allows a team member to address it.



2 Establish guidelines

Everyone needs to understand the ground rules for coaching sessions. This helps to build a safe environment and gets everyone focused on the right things. Guidelines don't have to be exhaustive – a brief list of high-level bullet points is about right. Below are some examples.

Things to do in group coaching:

- ✓ Keep feedback focused on the coachee's learning objective
- ✓ Come to the session prepared and actively participate
- ✓ Ensure comments are delivered constructively
- ✓ Be polite, kind and considerate when providing coaching feedback
- ✓ Provide candid and honest feedback
- ✓ Remain open to new ideas
- ✓ Accept that no one has all the answers
- ✓ Respect that all views have equal weight and value
- ✓ Commit to improving yourself and the team

Things not to do in group coaching sessions:

- ✗ Lay blame on anyone
- ✗ Score or grade a sales call
- ✗ Compare performance to someone else's
- ✗ Get angry or upset over feedback
- ✗ Take revenge on someone inside or outside the coaching session
- ✗ Be overly self-critical – we all make mistakes, this is a celebration of learning

3 Use other coaching methods to familiarize teams with the concept

Some sales leaders might feel as if jumping right into group coaching is asking too much of their teams too soon. In these cases, showing the team to coaching through other methods can help them get comfortable with the concept of coaching before doing it with a group.

Some other methods include:

- Self-coaching: Requiring team members to review 3-4 hours of their own call recordings later is the bedrock of self-coaching. The key is to be honest with themselves about what went well and what didn't. They should bring these learnings to one-on-one conversations with managers.
- Peer-coaching: Peers can review each other's recordings and offer feedback outside of a formal group session. They listen to the call and then describe what they think went well and what needs improvement. Peer-coaching is a collaborative effort all done in the spirit of helping each other, which we call "self-coaching with accountability."
- Leader-led coaching: This is the type of coaching that's probably most familiar. It's often a one-to-one session between a leader and a team member or a direct report.

4 Make group coaching a scheduled event

High-performing salespeople know that process and discipline are keys to success. Accordingly, teams that have the most success with group coaching make these sessions a part of their team's weekly routine.

We recommend scheduling one hour per week for group coaching and making attendance a must. An hour a week is just 2.5% of a 40-hour week, which most teams find do-able.

Whatever cadence you choose for your group coaching session, be consistent. While they are both important, consistency matters more than frequency.

We also suggest scheduling these sessions to occur first thing in the morning. This demonstrates that coaching is a priority in your organization – and it ensures team members are fresh and ready to give their best.

Further, the day-to-day routine for a salesperson can be up and down like a roller-coaster. Holding these sessions late in the day can affect the mood. For example, if the team has had a rough day on the phone this will impact the atmosphere inside the coaching session.

5 Form small cohorts for group coaching and consider experience levels

We've found that the optimal number of people involved in a group coaching session is 4-6 team members. This ensures everyone has the opportunity to give feedback within a session that's scheduled for an hour.

We also recommend including a mix of experience levels in each group coaching cohort. This will help ensure the knowledge the more seasoned members of the sales team possess is passed along, and perhaps more importantly, retained in the organization. Similarly, this also exposes experienced members to fresh ideas and thinking from new or junior team members.

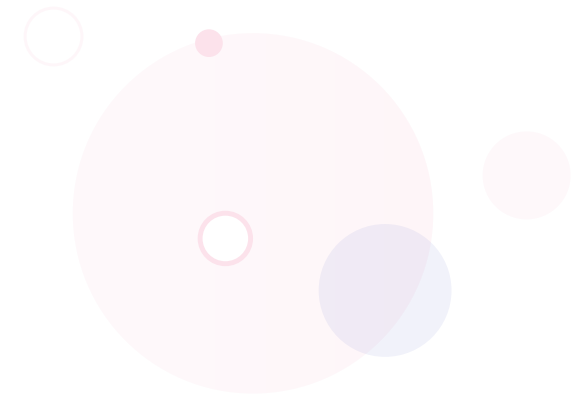
Some of our customers have reported senior executives will get involved with coaching. For example, one B2B sales team noted their CEO will attend group sessions.

This is beneficial for everyone because the CEO can hear firsthand the challenges their sales team is facing. At the same time, the team can learn from their experience and get genuine feedback from a c-suite level "buyer." It's also quite motivational for the team to see first-hand the interest senior leaders have in their well-being and professional development.

6 Ask the team to sit somewhere else for group coaching sessions

Most B2B sales organizations (59%) are still operating in a remote work environment – and chances are it will continue this way for the foreseeable future. It's a challenge to balance work and life when the team is working from a home office – and the same is true for learning and coaching.

For this reason, we recommend that coaches and facilitators encourage their teams to go somewhere else for the group coaching sessions. Maybe that's in the kitchen or outdoors, or even a neutral space like a favorite coffee shop. Wherever that may be, the key is to help the team separate "coaching mode" from "work mode" and get into a frame of mind to share, learn and have a little fun with it.



7 Favor self-nominations over a rotating roster

Nominations for group coaching sessions work best when an individual contributor nominates themselves. This is because if sessions are scheduled to follow a roster, a team member with a burning need may have to wait weeks for their next turn.

For example, if a team member just got off a difficult sales call, that's a perfect coaching opportunity. They can share a recording of that call with their team to review right away and get on the calendar for a group coaching session.

Be sure to have an inclusive process for reviewing and selecting call nominations to keep the weekly sessions moving along.



Getting started with group coaching

Sales leaders will often note that putting off an important, but uncomfortable, sales task won't get a sales representative any close to landing a deal.

Something similar is often at play with group coaching. Sales teams are faced with many competing priorities, and in our experience helping teams with group coaching the biggest barrier to these programs is getting started. So, in 2023, resolve to put your first group coaching session on the calendar.

It's worth noting too that, if you want help getting started, Jiminny offers a workshop on group coaching for customers. Simply reach out to your CSM and we can get a tailored workshop booked in the calendar.

"It was a very insightful session – helped to see my demos from a different angle. The mistakes were defined, improvements suggestions made – overall I really liked it, and I wish I had this performance assessment more often."

Vladyslav Maksimov,
B2B sales representative, Prowly

About Jiminny

Jiminny is a conversation intelligence platform. Its clever AI records, transcribes and analyzes new and existing customer conversations so that teams can learn how and why they win or lose deals, and can use those insights to perform better, grow revenue and smash targets.

With Jiminny, revenue teams can learn from each other, self-coach and coach others. The key to a company's success is the investment they make in the growth and development of its culture, which in turn shapes its people. Revenue and growth will follow.

Jiminny was recently named the [#1 conversation intelligence tool](#) on G2 for their Summer 2022 report. Take a tour on your own, book a demo, or trial Jiminny for free [here](#).

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