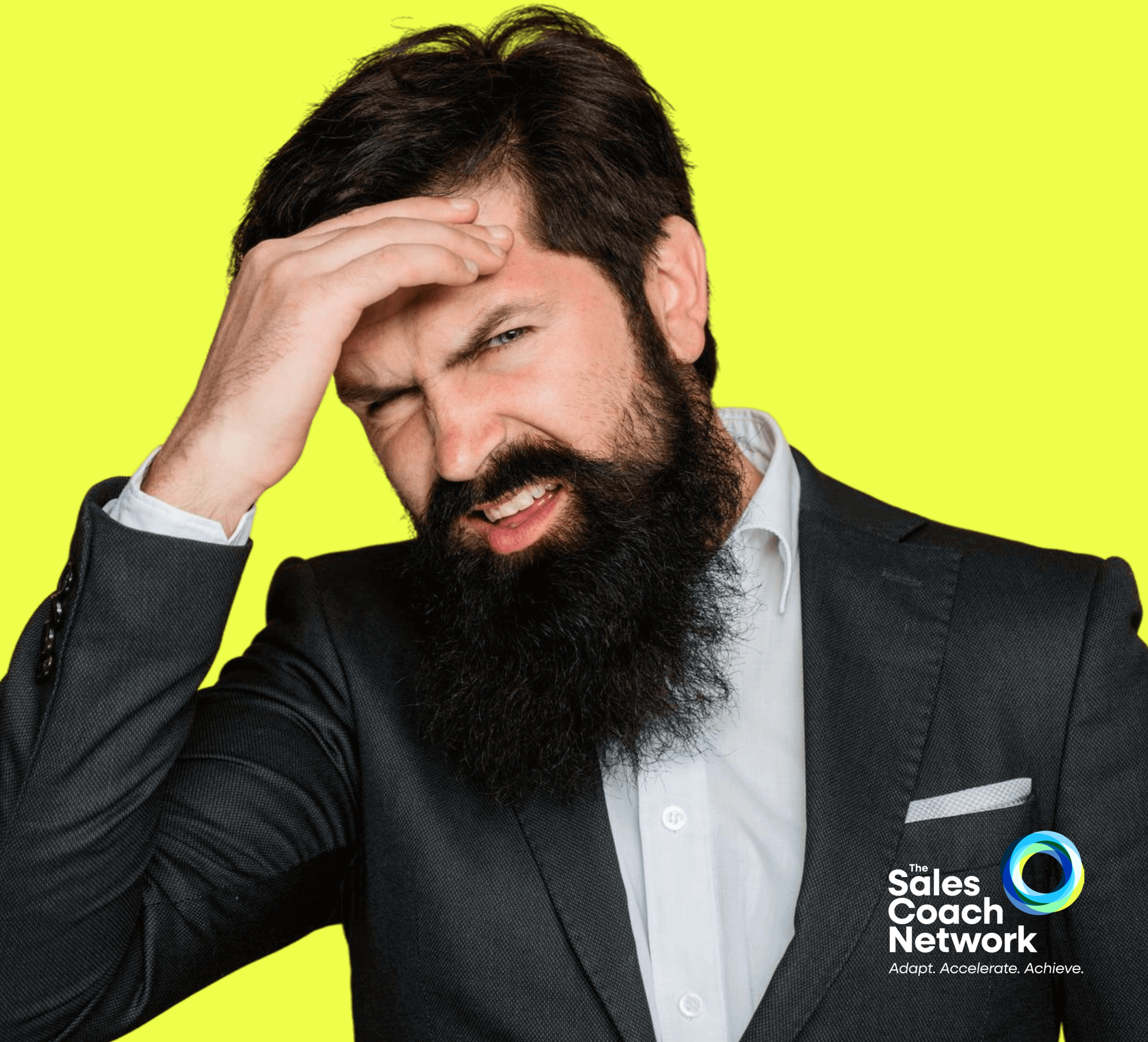
What if more sales training isn't the answer?

Why sales training alone doesn't move the performance dial... and what to do about it



The Sales Coach Network

Adapt. Accelerate. Achieve.

Are you wondering why sales training hasn't delivered sustainable revenue growth in your organisation?

Do you feel frustrated that despite significant investment in training, performance gains never seem to last?

If so, you're in the right place.

In this paper, you will learn how the **Forty**-20-40™ principle takes a holistic view of change.

It combines leadership alignment, strategic interventions, and disciplined execution to drive reliable, long-term sales performance.

By the end, you'll be able to decide if your current strategy is truly fit for purpose, or whether a more integrated model could deliver the lasting results your business needs.

Millions Invested, Returns Lagging

Every year organisations spend millions on sales training, expecting quick wins and measurable revenue growth. Yet the uplift rarely sticks. Skills fade quickly, behaviours regress, and the hoped-for return on investment fails to materialise.

Research from McKinsey and Bain shows formal training can deliver a short burst of productivity, sometimes up to 50%, but the benefits are usually gone within months. Nearly two thirds of organisations remain dissatisfied with the long-term impact, and up to 84% of sales training content is forgotten within three months.

The result is incremental, short-lived improvement rather than the transformative change in performance that leaders expect.

Why Training Alone Doesn't Move The Dial

Poor knowledge retention

Most sales training is quickly forgotten and rarely applied. Research shows up to 84% of content is forgotten within three months. Without reinforcement, knowledge rarely translates into lasting behaviour change.

Insufficient alignment

When leaders aren't fully bought in, training efforts lack cohesion and direction. Teams return to their day jobs and fall back into old habits. Alignment at the top is critical to embed new ways of working.

Missing infrastructure

Even the best training fails if the systems and processes don't support it. Without integrated tools and clear accountability, new skills struggle to transfer into real-life sales scenarios.

Execution gap

Sales teams revert to old habits without strong leadership, consistent coaching, and reinforcement. This undermines both investment and intent.

Measurement challenge

Too few organisations measure the right things. Effects of training are hard to attribute and measure without sustained lead and lag indicators that show genuine performance improvement and true value over time.

Culture

Holistic transformation, encompassing culture, leadership cadence, and continuous improvement is where lasting advantage is realised, according to Bain and McKinsey.

The Answer:

The Forty-20-40™ Principle

Experience and evidence show that any successful intervention designed to drive sustainable revenue growth must be treated as a change programme from the outset.

The **Forty**-20-40™ principle reframes success as the sum of what happens before, during, and after any training intervention. It involves a systematic approach for building the conditions, methods, and disciplines that ensure any revenue change programme delivers commercial results. It aligns leadership focus, targeted interventions, and disciplined execution so that new approaches and behaviours create impact and remain embedded long after the initial activation.

The Forty-20-40™ principle broadly represents the balance of effort required to achieve sustained change.

Forty% **Performance Enablers**

20% Strategic Intervention(s)

40% Disciplined Execution

McKinsey highlights the importance of ongoing leadership alignment, structured interventions, and relentless execution in achieving transformational growth, not just isolated training events. Bain's research reinforces the same point: organisations that embed all three drivers outperform those that rely on training alone, achieving sustainable revenue growth.

Performance Enablers

Success begins with readiness. Define the current and desired future states, then build the conditions for growth. That means leadership alignment, clear growth objectives, strategic focus, and the right systems, methodologies, and tools to enable change to scale. Key components include:

- **Vital Few Change Drivers**
  - Assess and agree focused areas for targeted performance uplift to **drive revenue growth**
- **Leadership Alignment Sessions**
  - Bring leaders together to define accountabilities, identify accelerators, and address blockers
- **Adapt Infrastructure**
  - Optimise processes and frameworks, align systems and operations, and ensure cultural messaging supports consistent execution
- **Governance and Change**
  - Clarify ownership, create governance cadence, and use lead and lag indicators to track success

Strategic Intervention(s)

Interventions must shift how people think and act. Equip teams with the mindsets, skills, and approaches to succeed, while applying them immediately to live opportunities. Make impact visible and measurable from day one. Core elements include:

- **'Why Change' Alignment**
  - Focus teams on the opportunity, the new approaches, and why they matter
- **Application Workshops**
  - Frame challenges, introduce methods, and enable immediate practice in real scenarios
- **Success Clinics**
  - Run post-workshop application sessions to work on key lead drivers, embed skills, address challenges, and amplify successes
- **Deal Coaching**
  - Provide expert led 'deal' or 'account' coaching to drive revenue and share best practice (deal storming)
- **Leader Coaching and Embedding**
  - Enable leaders to coach, ask the right questions, support adoption, and build confidence in sustaining change (question driven adoption)

Disciplined Execution

The final step is to hardwire change. Build structure, cadence, and accountability so behaviours are sustained and scaled. Coaching, measurement, and reinforcement ensure progress doesn't fade. Turn good intentions into enduring and predictable revenue performance. Execution in practice looks like:

- **Revenue Rhythm**
  - Embed new behaviours into management cadence and revenue reviews
- **Leader Reporting**
  - Use lead and lag scorecards to create accountability and track adoption (red, amber, green)
- **Team Outcome Plans**
  - Implement 30, 60, and 90-day 'prove it' plans with measurable outputs
- **Success Amplifiers**
  - Share best practice and success stories, curating them into playbooks
- **Focused Coaching and Support**
  - Cohort, team, and 1:1 reinforcement support and deliberate practice for targeted lead driver(s)

About Us

The Sales Coach Network partners with clients to design and implement sustainable revenue growth programmes. Clients benefit from expert-led workshops, leader coaching, infrastructure design, and robust execution frameworks. Our **Forty**-20-40™ principle is built to ensure every intervention drives measurable results.

Our global experience has shown that five components are critical to sustaining behaviour and culture change:

1. **Designed intentionally** to drive growth and change behaviours
2. **Leader-led** so execution is driven from the top, with champions embedded in teams
3. **A common framework** so everyone shares the same tools, language, and behaviours
4. **Reinforcement and accountability** through governance that embeds new skills and ways of working
5. **Alignment to business outcomes** so programmes deliver long-term results and become part of the wider ecosystem

We believe every programme should be custom designed and branded to create ownership and commitment. Training for training's sake isn't enough. Programmes must be focused on business outcomes, clear on the 'why,' and anchored to two or three simple lead and lag measures by which success is judged.

Critically, we invest in what matters most: success. We'll often link part of our fees to measurable performance uplift, aligning our incentives with yours.

What To Do Next

If you're serious about creating lasting sales performance, the next step is simple. Connect with a Managing Partner of The Sales Coach Network for a confidential discussion about your challenges and how our **Forty**-20-40™ principle can help.

Together, we'll explore the challenges unique to your business and assess whether a tailored workshop and integrated approach could deliver the results your investment deserves.

Get in touch

+44 (0)1223 967320

team@thesalescoachnetwork.com

www.thesalescoachnetwork.com

About the Authors

Les Bailey

Managing Partner

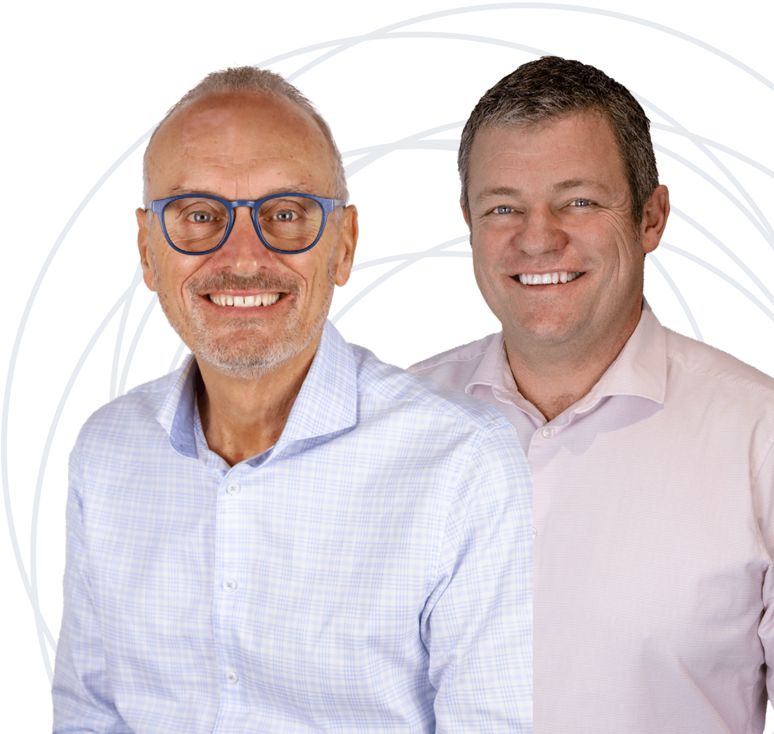
Les is the creator of The Sales Accelerator Method and founder of The Sales Coach Network. With over 30 years in sales and leadership roles, he has sold and coached transformational deals worth hundreds of millions. After selling his second consulting business to Accenture in 2006, Les went on to advise global organisations on how to win and deliver their most complex opportunities. His focus today is on helping sales leaders and their teams 'sell less and win more' by putting client value at the centre of every conversation.

Jonathan Bouchier

Managing Partner

Jonathan has led and coached sales teams across scale-ups and global enterprises in consulting, technology, SaaS, professional services, financial services and more. His experience ranges from frontline business development to coaching board-level pursuits. Known for turning theory into practical action, Jonathan helps leaders and their teams embed the systems, habits and conversations that win complex deals consistently.

Together, Les and Jonathan bring decades of experience, a proven methodology and a practical, human approach to transforming sales performance.



The Sales Coach Network

Adapt. Accelerate. Achieve.

Get in touch

+44 (0)1223 967320

team@thesalescoachnetwork.com

www.thesalescoachnetwork.com