

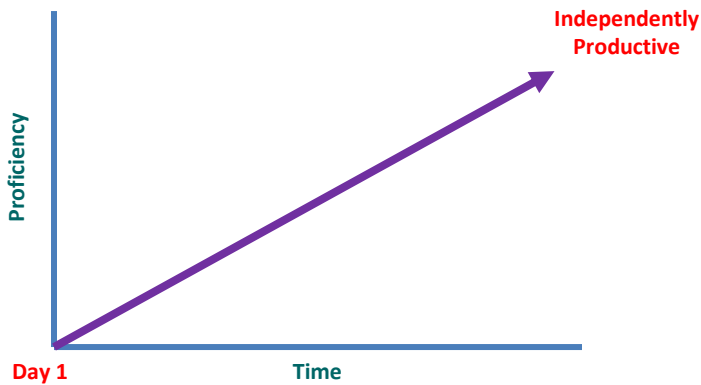
A Learning Paths Whitepaper

The background is a deep blue gradient. It features several glowing, curved lines that sweep across the frame from the bottom left towards the top right. On the right side, there is a large, semi-transparent globe-like structure composed of a grid of small, glowing blue dots. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and high-tech.

Put Your Sales Force on the Fast Track

The Clock is Ticking

Every day that a new salesperson isn't up-to-speed or fully productive equals lost sales opportunities, more unprofitable business and even lost customers. As a result, there is a direct and measurable financial benefit for reducing what we call time to proficiency as shown in the chart below.



Over time as proficiency increases, salespeople will eventually become independently productive or they will leave. For the purposes of discussion, we'll define independently productive as the day a salesperson meets his/her sales goals. These sales goals can include dollar volume, profitability, number of new customers, average sale, proposals written and other key sales activities. These goals will vary based on the type of sale and the role of the salesperson.

In sales environments where salespeople work largely on commission, independently productive could mean the day a salesperson starts making a living doing this job. This includes realtors, stock brokers, travel agents and insurance agents. From management's view, independently productive might be the day a salesperson generates more revenue than they are paid in salaries and commission. In other words, the day they reach breakeven.

This same concept can also be applied to the current sales force when launching new products or opening new markets. The faster the sales force can respond, the quicker you will see a return on investment.

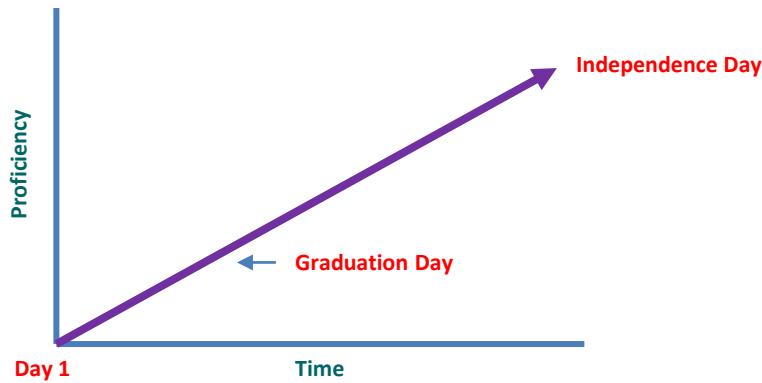
Graduation vs. Independence Day

So how do you get to independently productive faster? Let's start by looking at a very traditional way of training salespeople. Usually there is an up front training period either in the classroom or using self-study. This may be followed by a period of on-the-job coaching or just trial and error learning. In other words, "you've been through training now here's your phone and phone book, start making calls." The following chart shows what this looks like.



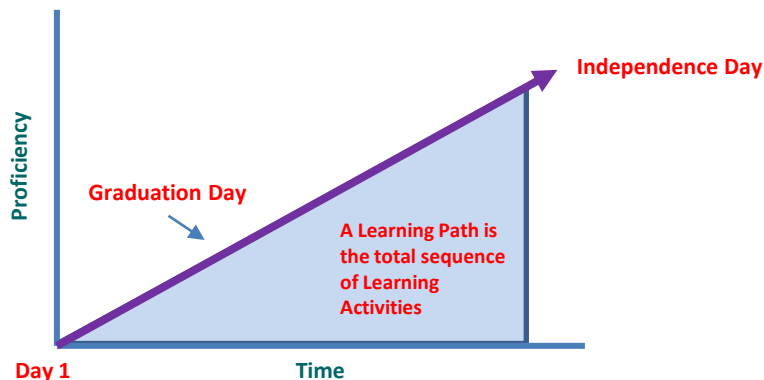
"Every day your salespeople aren't fully up-to-speed impacts the bottom line."





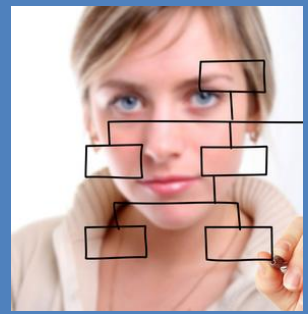
Graduation day is the day training ends, which is usually a long way from independence day. The time in between is a mystery period where there is a lot of trial and error learning going on. There's also a lot of frustration and attrition during the mystery period. It's also a time where less than trained salespeople burn through markets and alienate customers. It's a high risk time.

Traditionally training only focuses on day one to graduation day. It's a traditional curriculum approach with a series of modules or courses. There is always some practice and application but it's rare the salespeople leave this training ready to make sales the next day. Therefore, we've abandoned the idea of a curriculum and look at Learning Paths instead. As shown in the following chart, a Learning Path is defined as the total sequence of training, practice and experience from day one to independence day.



What this allows us to do is to structure the entire timeline so that it is complete, cost-effective and shorter. This starts by mapping out the current Learning Path and looking for Quick Hits. Quick hits are improvements that are easily found when a current path is laid out for the first time. Examples of Quick Hits often include:

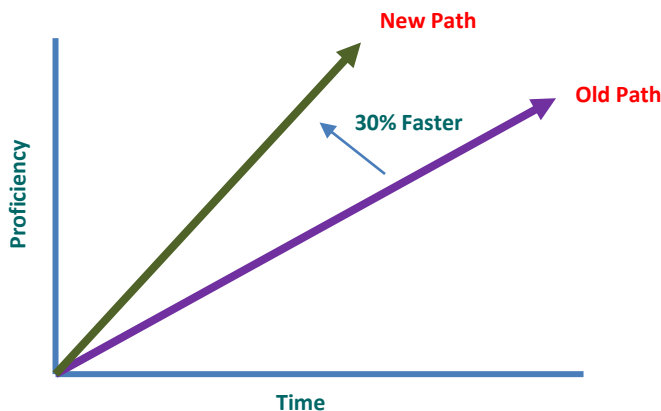
- Deleting old and out of date information
- Adding missing or relevant information
- Structuring the mystery period with practice activities, checklists and evaluations
- Adding more practice and experience to the formal training
- Aligning the training with current practices and business goals



“A Learning Path is the total sequence of learning activities from day one to proficiency.”



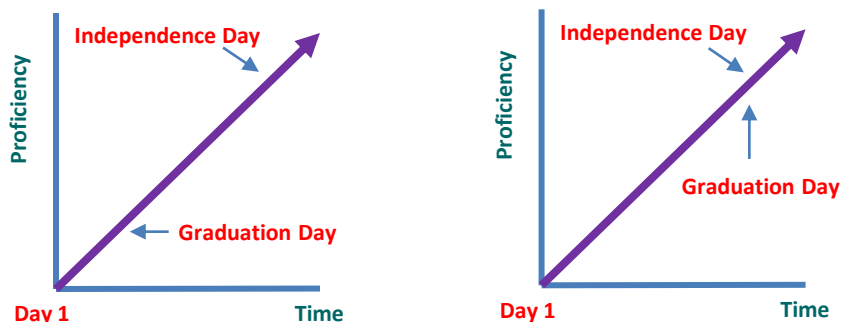
From our experience working through this initial process, it's typical to be able to develop a revised Learning Path that is 30% shorter within the 30 Days as shown in the following chart.



“Reduce time to proficiency by a minimum of 30%:

This is significant! Take the example of a sales force where instead of meeting sales goals in 9 months, they hit those goals in 6 months, that's 3 extra months of sales revenue. It also means that when they get to month 9 they will continue to be ahead not just even because they have 3 extra months of experience at full productivity.

We use this Quick Hit process first to demonstrate the value of the Learning Path methodology which then earns us the right to do a more in-depth reengineering of the Learning Path to achieve even greater results. In this process, we apply all of the principles of accelerated learning to shorten the Learning Path and close the gap between graduation and independence day. This is shown in the following chart.



In this process, there are a number of ways we generate additional cost savings and revenues, we try to drive as much content delivery as we can out of classroom training and into directed self-study. This reserves expensive classroom time for practice and application. Second, we resequence the training from simple to complex so that salespeople can begin doing some of the easier sales tasks with hours or days of starting.



Third, we involve sales management in the development and delivery of training so that everything directly relates to what needs to happen in the field. As a result, management coaching and supervision becomes a key part of the Learning Path.

Finally, the bottom line of Learning Paths is that it is a rigorous approach that measures and continually reduces time to proficiency. This is a direct financial benefit to any organization and also makes it possible for the sales force to quickly respond to new sales opportunities and market conditions.

About LPI

Learning Paths International is a performance improvement consulting firm with partners in the U.S., China, Canada, U.K. and Europe. In addition to the Learning Path Methodology, LPI also offers a wide range of consulting and learning development services including: strategic planning, change management and leadership development

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