

Target Account Selling

Target Account Selling (TAS) is a sales process training workshop originally developed in 1988 by Target Marketing Systems, an Atlanta-based sales training company, which merged with The Sales Consultancy in 1998, before being acquired by Siebel Systems in 1999, and auctioned to software company Select Selling (rebranded as The TAS Group) in 2006. The TAS Group used its acquisition of TAS to promote its Dealmaker software, which was customized and relaunched as TAS Select.

At its peak, TAS was one of the world's most popular sales processes, earning more than half a billion dollars in revenues during the 1990s, mostly from customers in the booming IT industry.

TAS was one of the first training programs to treat selling as a prescriptive process that could be applied across a salesforce. It taught 20-questions for qualifying the validity of pursuing one sales opportunity compared to another. Five military strategies were taught to assist making decisions about how to deal with competitors during a sale, based on the writings of Chinese general Sun Tzu in the book *The Art of War*. The effect of relationship dynamics, politics and personal influence between buyers were also in the curriculum.

Students spent two days in a classroom environment learning the theory and planning how to apply it to current sales projects. They then attended a third day Test & Improve session in which peers critiqued the quality of their 10-page sales plans in reviews that lasted 90 minutes each. A separate one-day manager's workshop, called *Managing TAS*, taught a system for analyzing each page of the sales plan, and gave a framework for staging the Test & Improve sessions.

Freelance trainers were hired to teach TAS. The difficulty of policing their use of the intellectual property on a global scale has led to TAS becoming one of the most imitated sales training workshops, along with another popular training program, Huthwaite's *SPIN Selling*.

As a landmark in the sales training industry, TAS provided structure to the selling process, and was a contributor to the industry's evolution. As a genre of sales training titled *Opportunity Management*, TAS belongs to the same classification of sales training as Holden International's "*Power Base Selling*", and Valkyrie Management Corporation's "*Strategy: the Art of Winning*", all originally developed by the same author, Art Jacobs.