



THE FUTURE OF SALES KICK-OFFS IN A HYBRID WORKPLACE

**TRENDS, TIPS, AND STRATEGIES
FOR THE NEW-AGE SALES LEADER**





INTRODUCTION

The past year has seen a dramatic change in how companies have operated for years.

83% of workers now feel that a hybrid work model would be optimal going forward.

To top that off, office spaces are now more about community building. E-learning infrastructure is being ramped up as we speak. Virtual interactions have been tightly woven into the ecosystem. If so much has changed, why are we still planning SKOs like we're in the stone age? It is important to remember that,

What got you here, won't get you there.

For some time now, your audience's (read: sales reps) expectations from SKOs has shifted. Sales

reps want more than just to hear business strategy monologues. They want to network, get energized, and figure out how they're going to be successful that year. Now there is also the added challenge to meet these expectations virtually.

This e-book will introduce you to an approach that aligns with the trend of remote workplaces. Read this guide to acquaint yourself with:

- Mistakes you should avoid (along with solutions)
- Actionable strategies to plan effective SKOs
- Recent industry trends and what you can learn from them
- SKO best practices and insights from industry experts

Ready to straighten up and fly right?





ONE MEGA-EVENT VERSUS AN ONGOING SERIES

Mistake #1 - Packing it all into 48 hours

**50% of new information is forgotten within an hour of encountering it.
70% is forgotten within 24 hours.**

Despite this, sales leaders organize one mega-event rather than a series of smaller ones. At the annual event, sales reps are crammed into their seats all day and given one presentation after another. Strategy, training, leadership conversations, networking - almost everything is a part of this two or three-day window.

This type of event,

- Costs you an exorbitant amount
- Requires the time of high-priced people from your company

- Puts your sales team out of action during that time
- Drains your sales team of their energy. They get tired and have a hard time absorbing and retaining information.

Bottom line, a mega-event for SKOs is so yesterday! Host frequent SKOs to engage your remote teams. Use a virtual platform and easily shift to a quarterly online sales training program instead of an annual SKO. This facilitates regular check-ins with your team and enables regular progress updates as well. Also, by hosting regional SKOs you can personalize the content and key message you want to deliver to a local team.

Expert Speak

Before, during, and after SKOs

From his experience working at Salesforce and interacting with CEO, Mark Benioff, here's one piece of advice Elay Cohen has for sales leaders

Don't think of kickoffs as an event. Think of it as an experience. This experience has a before, during, and after.

Before is a great opportunity to get your teams to be thinking about topics. You can assess them, you can have them practice with content you'll be sharing at the event. There's so much you can do with people before an event. And then during the event, you can really understand where they're at. You can use this time to motivate, energize, and inspire. And post-event - that's where you do the reinforcement - with relevant content and virtual training programs.



Elay Cohen

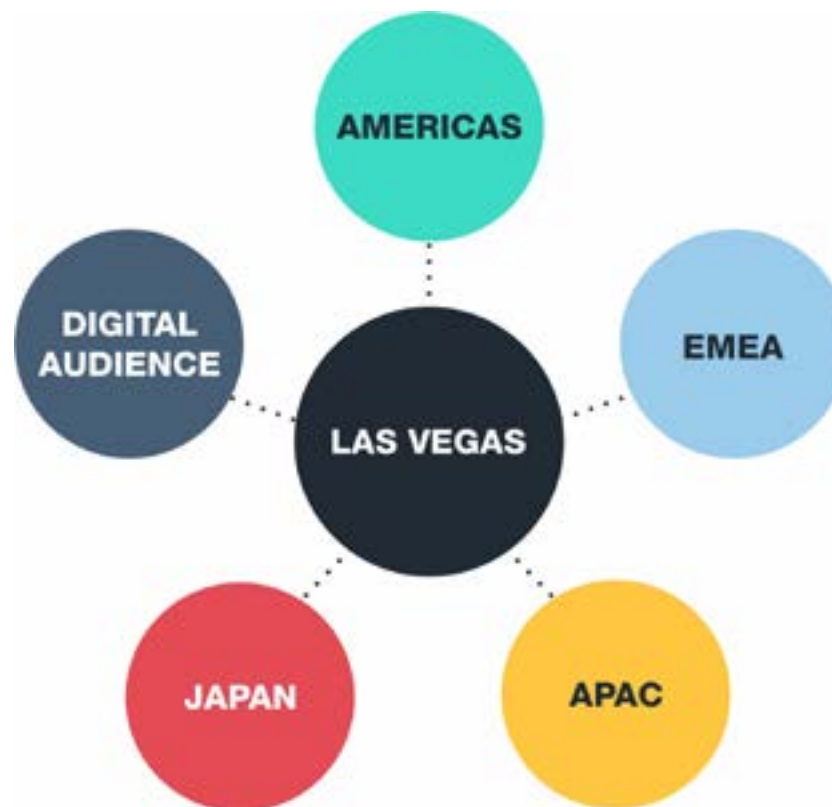
CEO & Co-founder - SalesHood

Regional Events

SKOs are gradually moving from centralized assemblies to regional events. Outlining your strategy, motivating your sales reps, and injecting an energy booster to prep for the year no longer needs to be a single, high-octane, one-off event.

With the right hybrid technology, you can now adopt a hub and spoke model and fish where the fish are. This gives you a central location for a select group of attendees to set the stage with top leadership. And then host regional watch parties and additional smaller events for the larger sales team using a virtual+hybrid event platform.

With a robust event platform, you can also localize smaller quarterly meetings, allow SKOs with an iterative approach, and keep conversations fresh among your leadership and sales teams.



Raymond McCarthy Bergeron
Digital Experience Director - InVision
Communications

> How can you prepare?

- Organize one main SKO and other smaller global and regional events frequently.
- Make these global sales meetings accessible to your team with a virtual event platform.
- Ensure to have a before, during, and after as part of your experience.
- Reserve the main event to motivate and inspire your sales team.
- Make networking a large part of your main event.
- Ensure your event platform supports various engagement and networking options.





GAMIFICATION

Mistake #2 - Opening a floodgate of information

It takes approximately 400 repetitions to make a new synapse in the brain unless it is done with play, in which case it takes between 10 and 20.

As a sales leader, you may feel tempted to frontload your SKOs with information. Business goals, product updates, messaging. Essentially the whole spectrum of information to supercharge your sales team. But here's the thing. Sharing a bunch of information at once won't be enough to get your employees to remember it.

Agreed, the information you're sharing with them is valuable. But, if your audience is distracted and bored, they're most likely going to draw a blank later. Instead, consider sharing bite-size pieces of

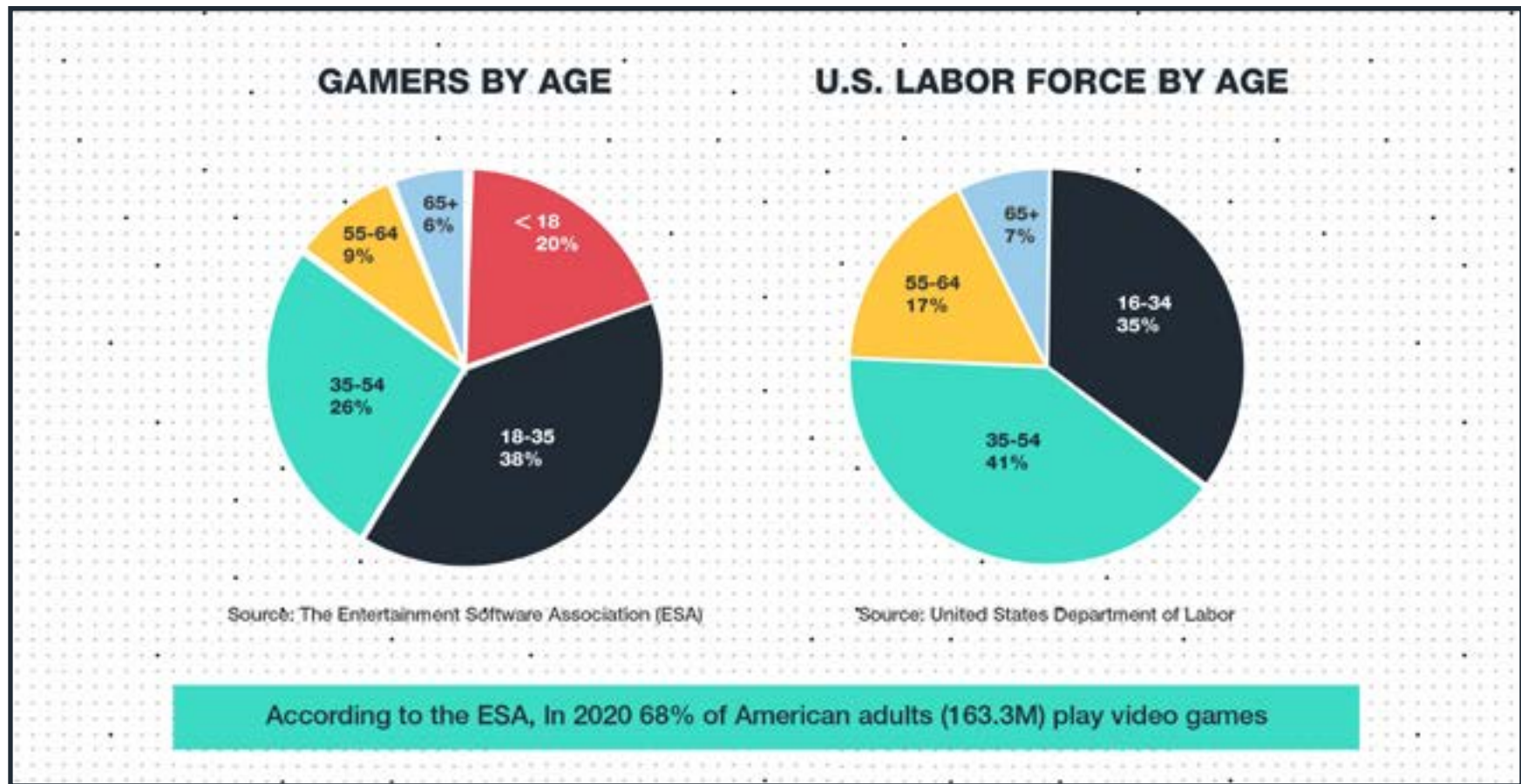
information all year round through regular virtual events. Take this a step further and gamify the process of content consumption and retention using online technology.



Understanding Audience Mindset

Salespeople love contests and competitions. To that end, you can gamify your SKO to create contests and networking games and turn it into a big competition.

Do your employees play games?

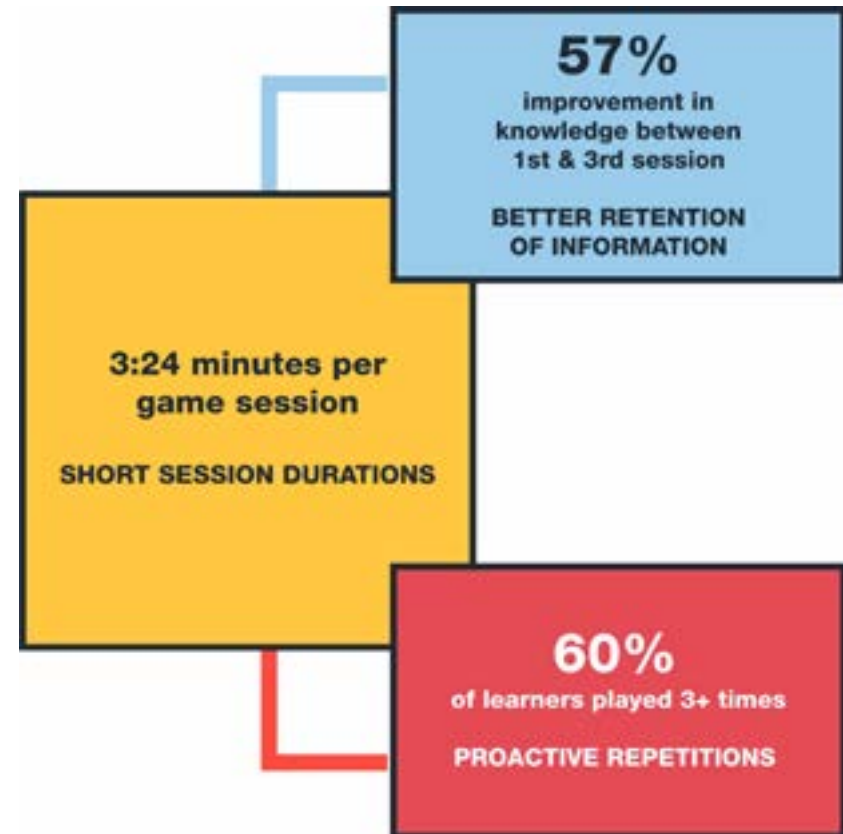


8 reasons your employees play games

1. Winning through fair competition
2. Winning in any way
3. Being loved and recognized
4. Feeling useful
5. Discovering new horizons
6. Solving problems
7. Mastering a skill
8. Becoming better at what you do

A comprehensive study on the effectiveness of games

The Game Agency conducted research across 1600 games. It involved 126,901 learners and an average of 82 learners per game. The results looked like this.



Expert Speak

Games drive fun and retention

Games are like a kiss. They're interesting to read about but much more interesting to do. When doing either, people tend to repeat the experience.

1. Active Learning - Games convert passive learning experiences into active participation. You'll see through real-time data what people know, what they don't know, what their behavior is when they're facing any challenges. This ensures that you're enabling everyone to get up to speed.

2. Higher Retention - Games provide the ability for repeat engagement. Compared to standard training, you'll notice the results are completely different and enhanced. Since game-based training needs an active level of participation, information sticks.

3. Simulated Soft Skills - You can use games to practice soft skills like listening, empathy, and intuition in a virtual environment. If you fail, it'll still be a low-cost way to make sure people are successful in the real world.



Stephen Baer

Chief Creative Officer - The Game Agency

STANDARD TRAINING



National Training Laboratories, Bethel, Maine

GAME-BASED TRAINING



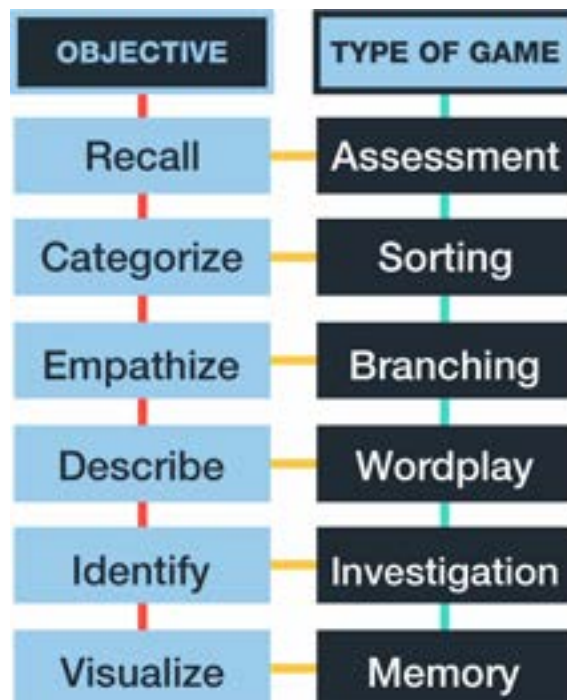
It takes approximately 400 repetitions to make a new synapse in the brain, unless it is done with play, in which case it takes between 10 and 20

> How can you prepare?

1. In the corporate environment, use games to do the following:

- Engage employees
- Change behavior
- Improve performance
- Drive sales

2. Align games based on your performance objectives.



3. Put in place a turnkey gamification solution and track people's successes across a variety of parameters.

4. Give your sales folks missions to complete. For example, read this, watch this, play this. Incentivize accomplishments with badges and prizes.

5. Design learning journeys to include games, videos, PDFs, and more and guide players through a fun-filled learning path.

6. Track and showcase individual progress on a leaderboard to keep the momentum going.

7. Enable notifications with real-time feedback to alert players of any updates.

8. Analyze trends and metrics across the key categories of engagement, frequency, and accuracy.



SHOWTIME EXPERIENCE

Mistake #3 - Making it dull and boring

49% of marketers say that audience engagement is crucial to having a successful event.

Virtual events that lack attendee engagement are 150% more likely to be unsuccessful.

Boredom is likely to creep in if your sales reps feel like they're stuck in something monotonous. With attention spans falling (we're at 8 seconds right now), the key to engagement is to ensure that there is never a dull moment at your virtual SKO.

Avoid being predictable. Don't stretch sessions into long-winding monologues. Engage in mind-stimulating activities. Don't let your sales reps

feel like they lack control of what is happening. Because when that happens, they're likely to switch off and disconnect.

Your main SKO event is one of the first interactions you have with your larger sales team that year. It's here that you get the sales team on board with your ideas and plans for the year. So, it's crucial you have them hooked. Particularly now since they're connected to you virtually. Use this opportunity to tell stories that are relevant, contextual, and personal. Engaging stories are key in anchoring the message you want your sales team to remember.

Most importantly, use this opportunity to create memorable experiences that they will remember for a long time.

Expert Speak

Let's explore trends companies have used in recent months to deliver successful events.

CEO Involvement

SKOs are seeing increased involvement from the CEO and leadership team. Earlier, top executives always wanted to be involved. But this was not possible since they were traveling or had other priorities to attend to. With virtual events, things have changed.

Use virtual events and have your leadership speak directly to the audience. Do it through a pre-recorded video or a live stream.

Digital Experience

Remote workplaces have led several organizations to move away from in-person SKO events. This has left organizers with additional

resources to deliver improved digital experiences. They're sparing no effort in engaging, energizing, and motivating the sales team.

Use the resources you've saved to plan memorable digital experiences. There are other ways as well that you can put your money to good use as well. Like by increasing mental health benefits for your employees. Or donating some of it to charity.



Pauline Kwasniak
CEO - Finedeeds.com

Engage the Chat

Don't forget that your attendees are connected to your event platform. Yes, they are viewing the presentation. But they are also engaging with each other, speakers, and sponsors.

Bring your audience to the forefront. Engage with them in the chat. Ask them where they're connected from. Ask them what they're hoping to learn from this session. Make them feel like they are as much a part of this virtual event as the organizers and speakers.

Audience Participation

Another recent trend is to encourage your audience to share the virtual screen with you. How? Invite them to perform at the event instead of bringing in professional performers. This activity has shown extraordinary results in the recent past. It saw submissions from all stages and career levels. And it truly engaged the



audience by letting them be part of the program.

Broadcast-styled Experience

Is your event a grid of boxes with nothing changing within the presenter's view? If yes, then how is that any different from a typical meeting?

Today, companies use broadcast-style shows to engage their audiences and communicate with them. A few are actually investing in permanent studios for corporate campuses.

What makes broadcast-styled streaming successful? Multiple camera angles, enhanced production value, a professional host, and display screens behind the hosts have elevated the virtual engagement. It has helped humanize your content and enable dynamic discussions.



Raymond McCarthy Bergeron
Digital Experience Director - InVision
Communications





BOOSTER PILL

Mistake #4 - Using SKOs for sales training

Sales reps attend SKOs to network, feel energized, and plan how they'll be successful this year. Adopting new skills needs a completely different mindset.

So you should avoid skills training during your annual SKO. Instead, use your virtual event platform and online technology throughout the year to do that on an ongoing basis.

7 online training ideas beyond the virtual SKO

Sales Call Recordings

Ongoing sales conversations are an invaluable source of real-time insights to learn from.

Recording sales calls for training purposes is a common practice at B2C companies. With most sales conversations moving online, B2B organizations can also gain from it.

Peer-to-peer Knowledge Sharing

Each member of your sales team brings with them unique experiences and learnings. Peer-to-peer knowledge sharing involves the distribution of this information with other team members.

The idea is to promote inter-team learning. Some forms of this type of training are

- Live training sessions
- Pre-recorded videos
- Success (failure) panels

Ensure knowledge is transferred across locations through virtual training sessions. This ensures your regional teams or individual salespersons are not working in silos.

Sales Pitch Training

The second most important type of virtual training for your organization-wide team is sales pitch training. You can use this event to educate your team with the ideal process to follow from lead to conversion. You can also familiarize them with collateral like pitch decks, videos, demos, and more.

Online Sales Certifications & Courses

“Learn continually - there’s always one more thing to learn”. - Steve Jobs

Provide your sales team with formal sales training and certifications online. It can include training for the soft skills needed to be successful sales executives. While this may need investments, it will be worth every penny spent.

Training With Industry Experts

Engage global industry experts via a virtual session to train your sales team from time to time. Topics can be sales-related or they can be related to developing soft skills.

Mentorship Programs

This program is also known as Buddy Program or Shadow Program. It involves assigning a mentor to new recruits for the first few months. It

is especially relevant for a smooth transition in a virtual or hybrid workplace.

Product/Service Training

This training is non-negotiable. It involves training your sales staff to become product/service experts. Running a detailed virtual demo/discussion followed by Q&A is one way of training sales reps about your product/service.

If you’re a software product company you can also organize a bug bash event. Here your sales reps will test the product and identify as many bugs as possible. The fact that they must interact with every feature makes this a great way to master the product and its features.

CONCLUSION

As a final note, here are a few things you should not overlook.

The first is that hybrid workplaces are already happening. And are likely to be the new normal in the future. So get acquainted with its dynamics, understand what you currently have, and find out what you'll need to remain competitive in a hybrid workplace.

The next is - gamify the hell out of your SKOs. Gamification is the best way to ensure people are communicating with each other, learning more, and most importantly are able to apply these learnings on the field. So gamify, gamify, gamify, all the way till the finish line.

And lastly, it is important to let your rainmakers swim in their own lanes. But as a leader, it is equally important to get them back periodically to track progress. It is also important to keep people moving into that beyond mindset with prepackaged content. As a leader you need to be their Northstar and keep guiding them in the right direction

If companies can do that, then that's a home run.



ABOUT HUBILO

Hubilo is the only all-in-one hybrid event platform built to drive engagement - and we do this with the industry's largest suite of engagement and gamification features.

Engagement on your fully branded event, backed by our designated full-time customer success team, ensures every event run on the Hubilo platform executes perfectly every time. All the enterprise security, integrations, and analytics you need - with the engagement and white-glove support you want

Visit hubilo.com to learn more.

Book a demo



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