

# Calix Strengthens Consultative Selling Skills with **Second Nature's AI Role Plays**

## The Results

- ✓ Increased average deal size
- ✓ Boosted new hire NPS scores
- ✓ Achieved consistency across sales teams
- ✓ Improved proficiency while reducing overall training time

## THE COMPANY

Calix is an agentic AI cloud and appliance-based platform and managed services company.

## THE PROBLEM

### Training Is Too Long, Managers Are Overwhelmed

- Calix's large and complex offering demands high technical knowledge alongside strong consultative selling skills
- Training was taking too long and not effective enough. Many reps hadn't completed their training.
- Managers lack time to view recorded elevator pitches, let alone send feedback
- Manager feedback was inconsistent

Calix has a large and complicated offering and serves a diverse global audience. Sales reps have to master a lot of technical knowledge as well as consultative sales skills. Too often, reps failed to listen fully to the customer's pain points. "Diagnosing before you really understand the problem is one of the biggest mistakes salespeople make," says Michael Martin, Senior Director of Sales Enablement at Calix.

The existing training Calix offered was time-consuming. Martin noted that the sales teams were “drowning in training” when he came on board, with long sessions that were a poor fit for modern employees who prefer fast, engaging content. Most sales reps hadn’t completed their training, because there was too much for them to memorize.

Sales reps would get manager feedback on recorded elevator pitches, but that feedback was inconsistent. Because of high manager workloads, most of the pitches were never viewed, let alone reviewed. This process consumed manager time without providing consistent, quality coaching.

## THE SOLUTION

### **Second Nature’s AI-Powered Training Role Plays**

- Second Nature was very easy to implement
- Recorded elevator pitches were the first place to integrate Second Nature
- Sales reps practice AI role plays with Second Nature many times throughout onboarding
- Calix took extra time to ensure role plays were “super relevant”

Martin and the enablement team at Calix found it very easy to get started with Second Nature and create engaging, effective AI training role plays. “Don’t tell your sales teams and leaders how easy it is to create. It looks like you’re doing a massive amount of work, but it’s so simple to create these simulations. With the features [Second Nature has] rolled out now with the AI integration just asking you questions and kind of building it for you, anyone, even an eighth grader, could probably build one within 15 minutes,” said Martin.

Martin and his team at Calix began by replacing recorded elevator pitches with Second Nature’s AI-powered role plays, because that was an easy place to segment the solution into existing processes. Then they incorporated more AI role plays into multiple instances through their 30-60-90-day onboarding programs.

Calix’s sales enablement personnel took extra time to ensure that the experience feels valuable for sales reps. They would often send new role plays to their Second Nature’s customer success manager, to get another set of eyes and make sure that the experience was fully relevant.

Martin warned that some teams “are already kind of training-averse. They’ve already taken training in some cases that wasn’t really helpful, wasn’t really valuable. We want this to just basically change the paradigm and change their thinking about what training is.” He added that “it’s hard to get over a bad impression. So we wanted to take a little longer to make sure that the impression was fantastic.” Thanks to this, Calix’ sales reps welcomed the new training solution.

## THE RESULTS

- Sales team performance, average deal size, and new hire NPS scores all rose significantly
- Real-time feedback strengthened consultative selling skills
- Sales reps have more confidence
- Proficiency rose while overall training time fell
- Managers can deliver targeted coaching where it’s needed most
- Calix achieved consistency across sales teams

Since launching Second Nature, Martin has seen significant improvement in key sales metrics, primarily:

- Sales team performance
- Average deal size
- New hire NPS scores

Martin highlighted the impact of real-time, formalized feedback. “It’s the really game-changing thing. You can really understand where you need to get better really instantly,” said Martin. Sales reps receive real time feedback that flags when they skimp on the discovery stage, which has strengthened consultative selling skills and directly improved how they engage with customers.

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Second Nature really helps us hone new skills, but we also use it for technical training. It’s really useful in either of those areas. [...] There’s just really no better way to do that than having them go through these role play exercises.

**MICHAEL MARTIN**  
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF SALES ENABLEMENT, CALIX

The new onboarding program enhanced sales rep confidence. “Going through Second Nature, it’s almost like a video game showing them that they have reached the level, that they are getting it, giving them the confidence to go to the next level,” says Martin.

Implementing Second Nature enabled Calix to reduce the amount of time spent on training overall, while increasing proficiency levels and outcomes. It also freed up manager time, because they no longer need to watch recorded elevator pitches. Second Nature’s concise and clear reports allow them to deliver targeted feedback and coaching where it’s needed most.

By formalizing training and making it measurable, Second Nature enabled Calix to achieve consistency across sales teams. Martin’s advice for others? ***“Don’t just keep putting this off because this is the future. And if you’re not already involved in something like this, you’re falling by.”***

## **Looking Ahead**

Calix intends to expand Second Nature for its external channel partners, so that they can also effectively articulate the value of Calix’ solutions. According to Martin, the channel team and partner training team are feeling “FOMO” because they don’t yet have Second Nature.

Martin also intends to take advantage of Second Nature’s multi-language features to improve the training Clix offers for its employees around the world.