



8 WAYS TO WOW AT YOUR 2023 SKO

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It feels like you've been doing nothing but roll with the punches ever since 2019 and the end of "normal." It was exhausting, but on the plus side, it means you have tons of experience to bring to your 2023 Sales Kick Off, to make 2023 the best year ever.

For the first time in 3 years, there's every reason to expect that most, if not all, of your sellers can attend in person. Plus you can bring your new expertise of running awesome remote events to offer hybrid experiences that combine the best of virtual and IRL for all your participants.

Which is just as well, because there's plenty to talk about. You want to prime your sellers with strategies for selling your solution during times of runaway inflation and/or recession. You might be making adjustments to your messaging and pricing to reflect the disquiet in the markets, so you'll need to make sure that all your salespeople are fully up to date.

The big question is: how can you use your SKO smarts to accomplish your sales goals during an unsettled economic climate? With careful preparation and dollops of creativity, 2023 can be your big year.

There may be sky-high inflation and threats of a recession, but nothing can keep your SKO down.

Here are 8 tips for making 2023 a banner year.

1. CLEARLY DEFINE THE EVENT GOALS AND KPIS

Are you:

- ▶ Pivoting your strategy?
- ▶ Retraining to sell into different industries?
- ▶ Launching a new product or updating an existing one?
- ▶ Expanding in the post-covid environment?

Each of these is an important consideration, and each demands different approaches to the SKO. For example, if you've spent the past year expanding into new geographies as the world reopened, you'll want plenty of bonding activities to welcome your new sales teams. But if you've had to rethink your direction, revamp your solution, and pivot to new industries, you'll prioritize communicating your new messaging instead.

Define your KPIs up front, based on your event goals, which will allow you to measure the success of your SKO. Are you looking to reach a certain level of sales for a new product post-SKO? Expand into a new market? Ensure that sales reps are using a particular tool or sales methodology?

Identify what is important to achieve and then determine how you will go about measuring it. For example, if your goal is to train reps to sell to organizations with shrinking budgets, you can measure their expected success by using role play sessions with Jenny, the AI sales trainer from Second Nature, and then after the event measure percent increase of new bookings.



2. CLARIFY YOUR BIG VISION

Are your salespeople just selling point solutions, or do they have a bigger vision to offer? One of the ways to keep salespeople engaged and prime them to close sales is to share a broader picture of the company. Use your SKO to remind sales reps that they aren't simply selling a single tool, but an entire suite of solutions that bring specific benefits to customers.

It's particularly important during a recession, when making sales can feel like wading through mud, and even reliable customers can become uncertain about renewing a subscription or reluctant to make an upgrade. The changing sales environment might lead you to roll out new messaging or pricing at your SKO, so you'll need to make sure that these get communicated accurately.

At these times, your sellers need the tools to explain not just individual features, but the overall value add that your solution can offer.



3. TRANSLATE THE VISION INTO PRACTICAL TACTICS

As important as the larger vision is, it's useless without execution. Sellers who are struggling to make sales are likely to find it even harder during a recession, so they'll need more than just a pep talk – they need practical help to turn your marketing-speak into actionable advice. Think of it as helping someone who's trying to quit smoking. Knowing all the benefits isn't enough to help them make the leap; they need practical ways to change their habits too.

If you're asking your salespeople to change the way they sell, you need to help them make that shift on a tactical level. Think about the top changes in behavior that reps need to make to meet your targets. Boil your new vision down to 3-5 key initiatives, such as new market, new message, and new pricing, and assign concrete goals to each one.

Break down your high-level strategy into detailed tactics, tools, insights and talk tracks, so that your SKO is all about driving change. Once your executive team lays out the big vision, your enablement team must be ready with the tools to execute it.

TWILIO leveraged their SKO to certify their sales team on the solutions of a company they had recently acquired. They knew that while it was important to present the new company vision, what their salespeople really needed was practical guidance and actual practice. **During the SKO, they were able to train and certify more than a thousand salespeople, who underwent hundreds of hours of role plays.** The team measurably improved in their sales conversations by 41%.

Salespeople trained & certified

➤ **1000**

Improvement in sales conversations

41%

4. MAKE IT MORE INTERACTIVE

SKO's need to include practical experience as well as top-down instruction and inspiration. That's never been more important than it is right now, when your sales teams are being asked to step up to the plate and make sales in a challenging environment and sometimes with new messaging.

So keep your lectures short and include more interactive tasks. Gamification, quizzes, Q&A sessions, and challenges all have their place in this year's SKO. You want to prepare your reps to hit the ground running, so help them refine every phrase, call, and sentence for maximum impact with role play practice with Jenny the AI sales trainer in Second Nature's sales training software.

Interactive sessions also offer more chances for your salespeople to share their concerns and anxieties and to give each other support. It's not surprising that sellers feel nervous when the markets take a downwards turn, whether it's out of concern for their jobs or anxiety that they'll struggle to make their quota. Plan sessions that allow people to talk and bond, to enhance the feeling that you're all on the same team and help everyone to feel safe.



5. RETHINK WHO TO INVOLVE

The remote or hybrid SKOs in 2022 and 2021 gave sales enablement teams the opportunity to invite more people to participate. It's not just about beaming in celebrities to add a bit of glitter – companies saw the impact of bringing in clients to share their experiences and promote the virtues of your product.

You might be planning an in-person only SKO for 2023 and not have the money to spare to fly in a client, but there's no reason they can't "virtually" lead a session to boost morale and help salespeople understand the customer's point of view. They're the best people to teach sales teams about changing priorities, and to remind them that ultimately, giving clients the tools to improve their businesses is why they plug away making sales.

It's possible that more employees attended last year's virtual SKO, like product people and R&D personnel who haven't been included before. Look for ways to keep them in the loop, whether it's a hybrid spin-off event, or you invite them to join for just one day. When inflation bites, it's even more important for sales, marketing, product, and development to be closely aligned.

6. ADAPT YOUR SKO TIMELINE

As we've learned from all the remote events in the past couple of years, it's a lot easier to stay focused in shorter sessions. The pandemic wore away at everyone's ability to concentrate, so while hour-long lectures might have been the norm back in 2019, 2023 needs a different approach.

That being the case, why not shake things up and consider spreading the event itself out across a longer period of time with more breaks? You might want to plan a shorter in-person core event that has all the flash and sparkle, but spin things out beyond the usual closing ceremony with a mix of in-person and virtual experiences, such as by planning mini bonding events for each team every week during the month after the main event.

It's also useful during times of economic turbulence, when you're not entirely sure what the next year will hold. Keeping the SKO spirit burning means that you can update and refresh your messaging on a quarterly basis, if that becomes necessary. Second Nature enables you to roll out new learning modules or messages every month or quarter for your sales reps to learn and perfect, and then you can hold a mini-conference for teams to compare their results and share tips.



7. PLAN LEARNING REINFORCEMENT

Did you know that students forget 75% of the material they have learned after a single day? This is known as the forgetting curve. It's particularly problematic if you're using your SKO to introduce a new set of messaging for the recession or to change your pricing. What's more, during a recession your sellers are going to have to prepare to handle more curveballs than usual. Even previously "easy" prospects could be tricky if their budgets are evaporating.

The good news is that repetition over time improves retention. Ongoing pitch practice throughout the quarter and the rest of the year becomes easy once you've introduced your sales reps to Jenny, the AI sales trainer in Second Nature's coaching software.

Reps can log in whenever they have a free moment, or choose practice modules specific to their upcoming sales calls, to brush up on skills. They can refresh concepts they have already learned (at, say, the SKO), improve their listening and objection handling abilities, and work on improving their skill level and upping their scores. This ongoing, individualized pitch practice helps your reps retain more and feel confident about making sales no matter what the economic weather.



8. DON'T FORGET THE FUN!

An effective SKO is more crucial than ever this year, but don't overlook the fun. It's even more important to engage sales reps, inspire them, and excite them about your product, your organization, and their sales prospects.

Using an interesting theme can take you a long way. The extent to which you invest in it matters a lot more than which theme you use, so don't be scared of being cheesy. Whatever theme you choose, take it, run with it, and apply it to every detail. You could have your CEO or CMO dress up in costume that matches your theme for your opening session or grand finale, for example.

Run guessing games and competitions, because people will do anything for prizes. Celebrate wins on an individual, team, and company level, and bring in more ways to help bolster enthusiasm and excitement among your sales teams.



SKO Checklist

DEFINE THE EVENT GOALS AND KPIS

Your SKO goals may include training on new markets, increasing reps' motivation, etc. KPIS should match your goals. Use Second Nature to achieve specific learning and selling goals, and measure the results before and after the SKO, and throughout the following months.

CLARIFY YOUR BIG VISION

Give reps the mindset and tools to sell your whole solution. Use Second Nature's Jenny, an AI sales trainer to roll out practice sessions to help reps sell the big vision.

TRANSLATE THE VISION INTO PRACTICAL TACTICS

Break down high-level strategy into detailed tactics, tools, insights and talk tracks. Each talk track can become a new coaching module for Jenny on Second Nature, giving reps the chance to practice it in their own words and polish their delivery.

MAKE IT MORE INTERACTIVE

Use interactive methods like gamification, quizzes and Q&As to keep people engaged. Second Nature's Jenny adds an interactive element of role play practice that reps can use before, during and after the SKO.

RETHINK WHO TO INVOLVE

Bring in clients to share their experiences, teach sales teams about changing prospect priorities and promote the virtues of your product. Broaden those involved to align the entire organization around the same goals.

ADAPT YOUR SKO TIMELINE

Reps can practice on in-between days with Jenny from Second Nature. And you can roll out new learning modules to practice throughout the year, keeping the energy of the SKO alive. Keep sessions short, and consider spreading out the days.

PLAN LEARNING REINFORCEMENT

Overcome the forgetting curve by building your reinforcement plan even before the SKO. Second Nature's Jenny AI sales trainer lets reps continue practicing and learning throughout the year, on their own time.

DON'T FORGET THE FUN!

Select a theme, get cheesy, prepare the swag bags, make it fun! Jenny from Second Nature makes practicing sales conversations fun! It takes the stress out of role plays and lets reps hone their skills independently.



About Second Nature

AI sales training SaaS company Second Nature has developed the world's first interactive AI coaching platform for salespeople. Through an AI-powered conversation partner called "Jenny," sellers go through immersive sales simulations in natural language to gain real time, personalized feedback that raises their performance and confidence. Sales managers can also spend more time focusing on generating revenue and inspiring their sales teams, and less time watching sellers' recorded practice sessions. The solution is proven to deliver higher sales productivity, faster onboarding cycles, and smoother roll out of company messages and strategies at scale.

Second Nature's SaaS solution has been implemented by Zoom, SAP, Check Point, Digital AI and Lookout, and stands out among its competitors as the only company offering a virtual pitch partner for unlimited, real-time practice and improvement.

To learn more about Second Nature, please visit secondnature.ai or watch this video.