



Leader's Guide to SKO Success: 5 Do's and Don'ts



Modern Sales Enablement



In-person sales kickoffs were declared forever dead at the start of the pandemic. But now they're back with a vengeance.

Done right, SKOs are magical experiences that drive alignment, engagement, and motivation. They require a magical combination of strategic thinking and tactical execution.

To help you succeed, we've gathered insight on why now is the perfect time for new thinking when it comes to SKOs. If you're not planning a fundamentally different experience, you're missing a massive opportunity to move the revenue meter.

Here are the 5 "Do's" and 5 "Don'ts" for your next sales kickoff.



5 “Do’s”

Here are 5 **Next-Generation SKO Strategies**, or “Do’s”.

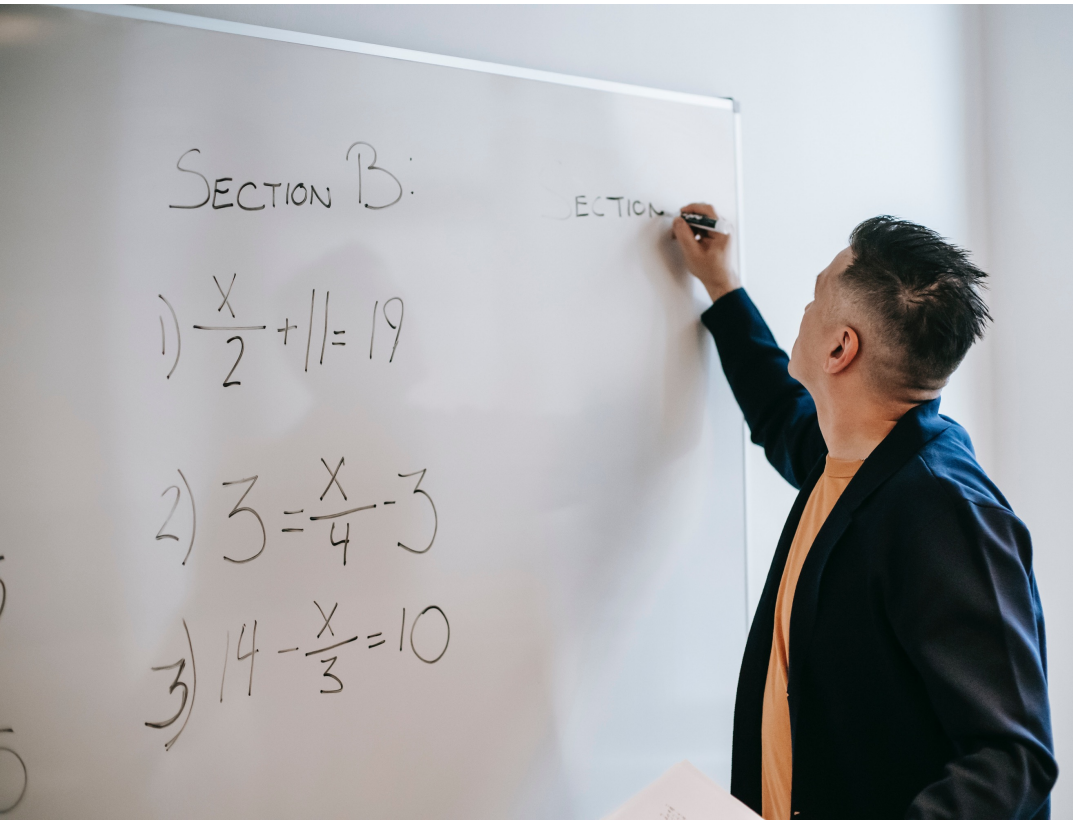
We present you with SKO challenges and best practices to help tackle them.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a black top and yellow pants, is sitting on a black chair and talking to a man. The man is bald, wearing glasses, a light blue striped shirt, and dark pants, also sitting on a black chair. They are in a meeting room with a glass wall. The text "Challenge 1" is overlaid in white on the image.

Challenge 1

There's of pressure to fill every minute of in-person SKOs.
Shorter attention spans desire **more face-to-face interaction and collaboration.**

Do 1: Adding through Subtraction



Open the agenda from your last in-person SKO. Then, delete 40% of it.

Include loosely structured **networking and informal collaboration**.

A woman with long, wavy red hair is seen from the side, wearing a light pink long-sleeved shirt. She is holding a black marker and writing on a whiteboard. The whiteboard has the word "MARKETING" written at the top and several yellow sticky notes attached below. The background is a blurred office setting with other people.

Challenge 2

Marketing, product, HR, finance, sales, corporate strategy... **many constituents, many things to say** – this creates disjointed and conflicting messages.

Do 2: Getting Everyone on the Same Page



All commercial teams and related functions must **be on the same page**.

Drive alignment by ensuring everyone delivers a part of one interconnected story.

A person is shown from a high-angle perspective, sitting at a table and writing in a notebook with a silver pen. The notebook is open to a page with a calendar grid for May 2020. The person is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing a laptop and a woven basket. The text 'Challenge 3' is overlaid in large white font on the notebook page.

Challenge 3

Larger agenda blocks allow participants to really struggle with a new concept
– **don't let participants off-the-hook with superficial understanding.**

Do 3: Balancing Participation Intake with Application



All commercial teams and related functions must **be on the same page**.

Drive alignment by ensuring everyone delivers a part of one interconnected story.



Challenge 4

Many treat SKOs like the point of arrival vs. the point of departure. Measurement is key – it's necessary for **continuous improvement** and expected by leadership.

Do 4: Initiating a Wave of Enablement



Define the team behaviors and **set measurable goals** to focus on over the year.

A man in a dark blazer and light shirt is presenting in a library. He is holding a small device in his right hand and gesturing with his left. Behind him is a projector screen displaying a slide. The slide has the following text: "Talking Point", "Activity - 5 minutes", and "Please share with your...". There is also a faint illustration of a person on the right side of the slide. The background shows bookshelves filled with books.

Challenge 5

Emotion is a big component of engagement and retention... now overlay this with the pervasive emphasis on **authenticity and informality**.

Do 5: Mixing the Fun



Make sure your **agenda is light and fun** – find ways to infuse humor and less serious activities.



5 “Don’ts”

Now that we’ve provided next-gen strategies, or “Do’s”, here are some **“Don’ts”**.

These are anecdotes based on a host of meetings we’ve observed as less effective, though often entertaining.

Don't 1: Executive "Talking Heads"

Don't **bore attendees with** long general sessions full of **Executive "talking heads"**.

People are not very interested in restructuring, new departments, and every new corporate initiative.

These sessions are made worse when Executives decide to wheel out stools and a couch on stage to make the session look like a talk show.



Don't 2: Irrelevant Key Speaker

Don't bring in a **keynote speaker with no relevance at all.**

While it may be awesome that you attracted a 1988 Olympic Gold Medal ski jumper or a trekker who scaled a treacherous mountain with a butter knife, people don't see the point.

Stick to your theme, engage a speaker's bureau and select wisely... or do not select at all.



Don't 3: Venturing Off-site

Don't include **off-site activities** that require buses, passes, lines, and late returns.

Shuttling people around is exhausting and creates higher cost and time. Save the time and expense; offer events that give people a chance to talk to one another and catch-up.



Don't 4: Party Central

Don't pick Las Vegas (or other **"party" locations**).

While it sounds awesome, it is almost always a mistake. Your people will be utterly useless in workshops, show up late, party all night, win or lose money, get in relationship trouble... and your meeting will invariably blow the budget.



Don't 5: Over-the-Top Production

Don't **splurge on extravagant productions.**

Yes, indoor fireworks and tigers riding mini scooters are cool. It's what we do at the circus, not the SKO focused on market growth and product innovation. Keep it simple instead.





Words of Wisdom

As you incorporate the "Do's" and "Don'ts" into SKO planning, also consider these Words of Wisdom.

We asked **sales leaders** from various backgrounds to **share their personal tips**.

Words of Wisdom



Doug Cullen, SVP, Global Head of DataSite, Merrill Corporation

“To me, the best events are those that foster sales team collaboration and networking from top to bottom. I love seeing the team interact and get to know each other on all levels.”



Justin Honaman, Head, Retail & Consumer Goods G2M, Amazon

“Start with energy, the meeting gets started on the right foot. 54 slides and a low-energy leader, and you set the wrong tone.”



Mike Morris, Director, Commercial Enablement, Boston Scientific

“Take the routine out of your sales meetings. Dare to try something different. It has set a high bar for us to continue to try new things. Success or failure, you must be willing to try new things to take the routine out of these meetings.”

Words of Wisdom



Trip Eberhart, Director, Sales and Customer Operations, The Coca-Cola Company

“Bring an element of surprise to your meeting. If you bring in a guest speaker, reveal a new product, or announce a business move, these can work to drive immediate engagement so that you can accomplish the additional objectives you set out for the remainder of the meeting.”



David Fulham, Sr. Director, Global Business Operations, VIAVI Solutions

“Sometimes, kickoffs need to be high on inspiration and lite on information. The impact of energizing the team and/or re-defining the sales culture can more important than the typical agenda of product updates, operational changes, comp plans.”



Chris Stein, Sales Enablement Leader, Equifax

“Sweat the details -- Ensure your presenters are prepped and screen content for relevance and impact. This seems very basic, but if you don't have someone on the planning team who acts as a 'screener' to ensure the content will resonate, you run the risk of having presenters who miss the mark, which makes attendees feel like their time is wasted.”

SKOs that Deliver Results

Next year's **SKO is an unprecedented enablement opportunity.** Don't buy into the myth that SKOs can't drive real results near and long term.

They can – and this year – they must.





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