

United Rentals Improves Sales Rep Performance with **Second Nature AI Training**

The Results

- ✓ Up to 35% uplift in revenue
- ✓ 5x increase in practice time
- ✓ Reps increased their performance by 30 points on average
- ✓ Sales managers gained the confidence to give feedback

THE COMPANY

United Rentals is the world's largest rental company for heavy equipment, with headquarters in Stamford, CT and locations across North America, Europe, and Australasia.

THE PROBLEM

Equipping Sales Reps for a Highly Competitive Industry

- United Rentals operates in a highly competitive industry, requiring skilled sales reps
- Manager feedback could be inconsistent and ineffective

The heavy equipment rental industry is very competitive, so United Rentals' sales reps need to be highly skilled to be able to differentiate their company. The company offers extensive training for discovery and conversations, but sales coaches were too overloaded to give sales reps enough time practicing real-world conversations.

Sales reps also weren't always receiving the feedback needed to excel, since manager feedback could be inconsistent.

Integrate Second Nature's AI-Powered Training Role Plays

- Second Nature was fast and easy to setup
- United Rentals integrated AI role plays into e-training, offering a limited set of common scenarios but multiple customer personas
- Sales leadership prepared sales reps for the initial awkwardness of talking with an AI-generated role play avatar, and explained the importance of sales training
- Human feedback was retained alongside AI-powered feedback
- "Coach the coach" sessions guide sales managers to support sales reps
- After seeing the success of Second Nature for onboarding, United Rentals rolled it out for 6,000 sales reps

Jeff Cummings, Director of Sales Development at United Rentals, and the rest of the sales leadership integrated Second Nature's AI-powered role plays into their existing e-training programs. This gave sales reps a safe place to practice, and delivered immediate feedback about their performance. The sales leadership encouraged more practice by explaining that improving their score is more important than gaining a high score on the first try.

Cummings found that building new role plays was "really simple and easy, you're building one every 20-30 minutes once you get the hang of it." He quickly discovered that it was better to prepare fewer scenarios but swap out customer types, instead of building several different scenarios.

Additionally, United Rentals offered Second Nature's training role plays to managers to give them the skills and confidence to support sales reps more effectively. They call it a "coach the coach" session, where the manager practices the feedback they would give to a sales rep for a recorded conversation.

Cummings notes that it's important to maintain human feedback alongside AI-powered feedback. "We don't want to remove the coaches from that whole process. And one of the things that Second Nature allows is to say, in addition to the AI feedback, do you want a live coach to also grade and support your comments here? And I find that really important."

After having seen Second Nature's impact on onboarding, Cummings and his team decided to expand it, integrating the AI role plays into its "Leading Change" training program for 6,000 reps, which focuses on strengthening the discovery process.

THE RESULTS

More Practice, More Confidence

- Up to 35% uplift in revenue
- 5x increase in practice time
- Average 30-point increase between first score and last score
- 6,000 reps practiced multiple different role play scenarios
- Each rep practices each scenario an average of three times, without prompting
- Reps can't game the system, the customer persona evolves
- Sales managers gain the confidence to give feedback to sales reps

After introducing Second Nature, practice times soared. Approximately 6,000 reps completed numerous different role play scenarios over 12 months, with each one practicing an average of three times and increasing their score by 30 points. The gamification motivated reps to attain the maximum 100 points, with some practicing dozens of times and one clocking 94 practices.

"We know that the more they practice, the better they get at it. And that has a big impact in their overall efforts out in the field with our customers," said Cummings, adding: "You want that training to start to become internalized, so they can continue to do it over and over again. And practice helps do that."

Data from approximately 2,000 United Rentals' Outside Sales Reps who used Second Nature was analyzed by researchers from the University of Houston, as part of their formal study into the impact of AI role plays. The study found that every additional role play practice translates into an extra 1.2% revenue gain, with reps who had been relatively low performing achieving revenue uplifts of 35.2% and those with high performance goals increasing revenue by 29.9%.

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JEFF CUMMINGS
DIRECTOR OF SALES DEVELOPMENT, UNITED RENTALS

Cummings appreciated that Second Nature's AI role play avatars deliver an ever-changing range of customer personas. This teaches reps to respond effectively to every type of customer. "What's cool about the program is that you're not still practicing the same exact thing every time, even though it's the same scenario.

When we apply the mood feature, you're going through a different customer persona each time. So it's not like the reps can game the system after they've done it once or twice. They continue to get better at it as the customer evolves."

United Rentals' sales reps enjoyed the accuracy of the feedback they received from Second Nature. "The immediate coaching feedback that a participant gets is consistent. I've never had someone come back and say 'it didn't get me, there was something I said that it missed'," said Cummings. "That's the beauty of the coaching tool, that it kind of homes in on those key elements you want somebody to really be focusing on."

Managers and coaches also benefited from the new AI training platform. Managers gained confidence by having a model to follow for providing feedback, while Second Nature's AI-powered feedback saved them time.

Looking Ahead

Cummings is in the process of implementing a new learning path with Second Nature to train Inside Sales Reps to execute a "warm transfer" well. This involves connecting a customer with a representative from another branch, requiring the rep to communicate accurately with multiple people at the same time.