

Consultant Competencies

A high level of credibility concerning sales issues. This means having functioned in a sales role, not having just learned it via textbooks and articles.

Someone who is not "on-the-career-make"; rather, an individual who is more at the mentoring stage of their career and is sincerely interested in seeing others develop the skill sets required to succeed.

Excellent communication and coaching skills are a must. This means providing feedback, which balances the positive aspects of data with a clear understanding of the developmental requirements. This is not always easy and often means adapting one's approach to meet the emotional sensitivity of the recipient.

Case Studies: Sales Effectiveness

Case Study I: Salespeople

High performing salespeople have always been the key to a successful organization. What makes a salesperson successful? The answer to this question is the key to high performance. Assuming you have the answer, finding, developing and keeping top sales people is the greater challenge.

The following case histories outline how some sales organizations increased sales performance through individual development and reward for professional competence with connectivity of these attributes to core business strategies and goals.

Background

A public manufacturing company based in the US with offices abroad, with approximately 16,200 people. The company has been losing market share with shrinking margins due to high competition and pressure to reduce customer pricing.

The problems lead to high frustration and tension within the sales organization resulting in excessive turnover, damaged functional relationships and decreased credibility within the industry.

The executive sales team is comprised of six individuals, half of whom rose through the ranks within the company. The sales organization, with executive support, committed to make the development of sales talent a top priority.

Objective

Develop and build sales talent to win back market share, regain profit margins and sustain positive growth.

Process

Phase I: Build measurable metrics

Executive sales team and key top sales performers meet to define measurements for objectives and strategy to achieve desired market share and profit margins.

Phase II: Assess key sales behaviors necessary for success

Top sales performers completed an online sales behavioral assessment. Executive sales team and key top sales performers met to define key sales behaviors needed within sales organization to achieve objectives. The result was a Sales Profile with eight key sales behaviors identified.

Keys to a Successful Project

Sophisticated, broad-gauged, long-term interventions do not typically follow a neat, structured process which can clearly be outlined in a proposal. They more frequently evolve as successes are realized at various stages which stimulate the client to explore the possibilities of expanding sales development to achieve even greater results.

Understand the culture of the sales organization, business objectives and the structure of the sales teams.

Phase III: Develop Current Sales Talent

All direct sales contributors participated in a group development session centered on their individual sales assessment data benchmarked with the sales profile. Because these individuals have not had much experience with assessment nor with the exploration of sales behaviors, considerable time was spent using the sales behaviors to discuss current business issues linked to the objectives of this project. Individual coaching was offered to selected sales contributors as well as some targeted group coaching sessions. Composite data was shared with the executive sales team to create targeted development and ongoing skill building.

Phase IV: Selection of New Sales Talent

Each new sales candidate that applied for a sales position completed the online sales assessment. The individual assessment was benchmarked against the Sales Profile to define the candidate's strengths and potential development needs if hired.

Phase V: Measuring Development Effectiveness

Post on-online assessments were completed by salespeople 12 months after the original assessment. The post assessment was measured against the original assessment data, performance metrics, and business objectives to measure effectiveness and sustain increased individual contributions

Phase IV: Pay for Performance

Partnered with executive sales and human resource team to update sales compensation plan that pays for performance. The new plan established new payouts for higher-level production, minimum performance levels and bonus opportunities linked to profit margins.

Results

- Market share increased by 18% within 18 months
- Profit margin increased 5% above five year average and exceeded expectations within 9 months
- Decreased turnover of performing salespeople to zero over a 12-month period
- Re-assessment during Phase V shows that the composite scores on four of the eight Sales Profile sets have improved in a statistically significant fashion. Seven of the eight behaviors are now within the designated effective ranges
- Created an acceptance and credibility for the model, and the common language of the sales assessment allowed all of the sales groups to understand the issues in a similar fashion
- Increased confidence level of sales organization by understanding the 'true picture' and achievement of objectives
- Established additional performance measurements for the evaluation process to make more sense of numerical data
- Sincere interest in learning due to development is individualized and based on behaviors whereas the salesperson is in control of changing versus personality based development or traditional training