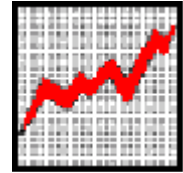


Sales Coaching

Tuning your Sales Performance – a Case Study



Even the most experienced sales people, who seldom miss quota club, can continue to improve. As in athletics, where gold medal winners set new personal bests and break world records, so it is in sales. Being the best and staying ahead of the pack needs dedication, application and continual access to expertise that you can count on to improve your performance. Experienced sales teams do not need more sales training, they need personal coaching. With a wealth of practical experience, we provide a unique sales coaching consultancy, designed to bring out the best in your sales staff and ensure that they deliver on their targets.

This case study looks at the advantages that a major software vendor achieved through the effective introduction of sales coaching. This is just one of our many clients who have benefited from the techniques of sales coaching. To protect the innocent, we will call them Softsell Enterprises.

What can Sales Coaching do?

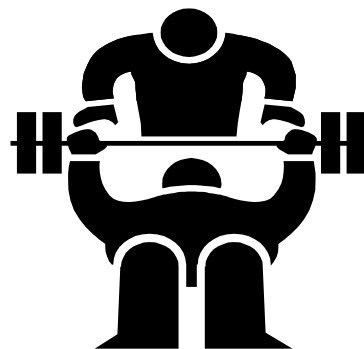
Experienced athletes don't need to be taught how to run, but they all have personal coaches. Some have as many as four at any one time, all of them working on different but equally important aspects of winning medals! We can all appreciate that the role of the coach is to bring out the best in the athletes by tuning their existing talent, developing skills and helping them to realise their true potential.

Your sales people know how to sell, but are they maximising your potential?

An effective sales team is clearly critical in you meeting your corporate goals. Your sales team lies between you and your target. Using sales coaching is a proven method to improve the performance and motivation of your sales people.

Our experience of working with our clients supports the view that sales coaching helps people to balance their aspirations with their skill development. From time to time, even experienced sales people need to rationalise their personal objectives with their business ones. In order to be happy and to perform at their best as individuals, most people need to feel secure, need to feel valued and need to know that the reward for their success is achieved through their own endeavours. In a highly competitive employment market, where effective sales people are a prized asset, organisations need to nurture their staff, just in order to hang on to them.

By evaluating and addressing the skills, knowledge and motivation that individual sales people require, sales coaching supports you in the achievement of your corporate objectives. In today's demanding business world, line managers are constantly under pressure to improve business performance; our partnership approach ensures that the equally important role of mentor and coach is not ignored.



Case Study - Background

Softsell is the UK subsidiary of a major multi-national software corporation, with a target of growing to 130% of last year's revenue. At the half-year, they found themselves lagging slightly behind plan. It was at this point, that they decided to introduce sales coaching for most of the sales team to improve individual and team performance, and achieve the overall target.

Approach to Sales Coaching

Introducing an external sales coach was considered to be more effective than putting the staff through more sales training, where typically groups of people are tutored on the strategies, tactics and techniques of selling. The coaching was delivered through one on one sessions, lasting half a day each.

The coaching started, by taking an inventory of each individual's sales skills. This helped the coach and the sales person to understand and agree the individual's ambitions and motivations, their strengths and their development needs. Typically, people have one key development need and two or three others. The needs were then broken down into specific action plans showing target completion dates and who was responsible for the actions.



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"increasing your sales revenues"

Individual coaching sessions were then conducted to address and monitor progress against the specified development needs. These coaching sessions were carried out within the context of the actual business. Coaching is not a theoretical exercise that takes time out of the business, but one that actually moves the business forward during the learning process. This makes coaching a particularly effective use of the sales department's training budget.

The coach encouraged small but purposeful changes that individually were relatively transparent but their combined effect normally had a measurable increase in the individual's sales performance.

An example of an "Individual Development Plan" form that we use to document each person's development needs and objectives is shown below.

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Individual Development Plan	
<i>Please note: this document is strictly confidential</i>	
Name:	Department:
Position/Title:	Manager:
Time in Role:	Appointment:
Coach:	Reviewed by:
Start Date:	Hours per month:
Sales Skill Profile (based on inventory)	
Date Last Taken:	View of:
Technical Selling Skills: /50	Behavioural Skills: /30
Managerial Skills /40	Personality Skills: /40
Development Need Profile	
Key Development Need:	
Need 2:	
Need 3:	
Need 4:	

Coaching for all

The role of the sales coach is to cultivate the capabilities of the individual and motivate them to exceed past performance to achieve their potential.

Our coaches' background is typically in senior IT sales roles, which enables them to relate to the issues confronted by the sales people we coach. This understanding and empathy created a bond of trust at Softsell between the sales person and their coach.

At Softsell, the most experienced sales people were actually the most appreciative of the coaching and found it most beneficial. To quote the sales manager *"In 10 years of doing this job, this is the first time someone has taken the time to talk to me about the things which are important to me. Despite my heavy workload I always make time for my coaching sessions, they really add value to my sales plans."*

Senior staff honed their skills through a better appreciation of the processes and cultural aspects of handling large international deals for global accounts. The less

experienced salespeople at Softsell, benefited most from coaching on the importance of building a strong pipeline, which with a typical sales cycle of 9 to 12 months, is equally as important as closing the present quarter's deals.

In each case, while improving their sales skills, the coaching also helped to move key sales forward.

The Benefits

Most sales directors appreciate the importance of nurturing and coaching their sales staff but often find that there isn't the time because of the corporate demand for business growth rather than staff development. As one Management Guru succinctly points out, *"Individual needs are not catered for by treating people as Human Resources"*.

By introducing an external sales coach the sales director at Softsell ensured that her staff's needs were well catered for whilst she got on with the job of growing the business. In addition, the inhibitions inherent in the manager/employee relationship did not interfere with the successful skill and knowledge transfer, which are essential in good coaching.

By addressing the individual performance issues, coaching brings out the best in people, improving their confidence and their motivation. While this has benefits in short-term revenue achievement, it also leads to a significant decrease in the attrition rate and turnover of highly valuable sales staff. Softsell's investment in sales coaching has reduced the time and money spent on recruitment. It also ensured that the sales force was continually at full strength.

The real proof of the effect that sales coaching had at Softsell can be seen in the company's results. After 6 months there was not a single account manager who hadn't met target! To quote the Managing Director, *"Our investment in sales coaching has gone straight to our bottom line"*.

Having seen the difference coaching has made, Softsell are now expanding their investment in sales coaching throughout other European subsidiaries.

SOCA's expertise in sales management coupled with ICR's knowledge of HR practices, particularly compensation strategy, ensures that our recommendations are effective in supporting your business goals.

SOCA Management Consultants Ltd

Tel: 01923 842200.

email: info@soca.co.uk

web: www.soca.co.uk

ICR International Ltd

Tel: 01869 278033

email: info@icrintl.com

web: www.icrltd.com

"Give us the courage to give up what we are, in order to become what we desire."