

Transforming Sales Training

Addressing the Needs of a Distributed Organization



TRANSFORMING SALES TRAINING TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS AND LEARNING STYLES OF A DISTRIBUTED SALES ORGANIZATION

PROBLEM

A North American food product distributor recognized that they had to transform their sales training to meet the needs of the 1,400 new sales reps they were hiring each year. Because their sales training was developed over a number of years by various constituent, their sales reps lacked a consistent sale methodology. To remedy this inconsistency, the firm created a standard sales process as part of an initiative called the One Company Approach. But how could the company quickly get their entire sales force up to speed in using this new approach?

SOLUTION

The VP of sales decided that the best way to do this was to develop a consistent basic sales curriculum and train the company's facilitators to deliver the new content. To develop this solution, the company engaged the Sales Readiness Group (SRG) because SRG's industry leading sales training content could be customized to the company's business. Eventually, the project grew to four phases.

The initial goal of Phase I, started in late 2012, was to develop instructor-led training (ILT). Based on intake interviews and ride-alongs on sales calls (most made in the kitchen of the prospect's restaurant), SRG developed a custom, eight-module course delivered in 4-hour-long modules for a total of 32 hours of instruction. The course was highly interactive and featured class discussions, workbook exercises, and role plays. After being trained in the new course, the company's facilitators were very successful in delivering it to the new sales reps, and the ILT was well received by the reps and their managers.

Nevertheless, the company still needed a way to train sales reps in regions without the critical mass of new hires needed to make a regular instructor-led course cost-effective. But how could the company train new sales reps dispersed throughout many regions without having to pay hefty travel costs to send the reps to an instructor-led course? To fill this training need cost-effectively, the company and SRG worked together to develop Phase II of the sales training — a virtual instructor-led training (VILT) course that covered the same content covered in the Phase I course. This phase started mid-2013 and the goals for Phase II were 1) to reduce instruction time to 16 hours while covering all eight modules of content and 2) to transform the live classroom interactions into virtual ones.

After the facilitators were trained in the new Phase II content and VILT best practices, they enthusiastically championed the virtual delivery method. And the district sales managers were

excited to be able to include new hires from other regions in VILT classes to accelerate their ramp up time.

However, the company still needed a way to help sales managers bolster specific sales skill areas in the performance of a sales rep who had already received basic training. But how could the company provide a refresher or reinforcement of specific sales skills for these sales reps — and do so cost-effectively? Answer: The VILT content was converted to on-demand or online training (OLT) in Phase III.

To provide the training on demand, each topic had to stand alone from the others, and all topics had to be organized by module. To make the content accessible online, the company planned to host the eight modules and 59 individual topics on the company’s Learning Management System (LMS). The sales reps could access the content from a simple, easy to use, interface that showed them how the content was organized and helped them find the specific topic they wanted to view.

Fundamental Selling Skills							
Effective Communication	Prospecting	Planning the Call	Identifying Priorities	Relating & Reinforcing Benefits	Managing Feedback	Gaining Commitment	Building Relationships
Importance	Importance	Importance	Importance	Importance	Importance	Importance	Importance
Components of Communication	Three Behaviors	Six-Stage Purchase Process	Focus Stage	Knowledge Stage	Evaluation Stage	Decision Stage	Value of Relationships
Listening / Not Listening	Basics Planning	Six-Stage Sales Process	Purchase Decisions	Five Buying Motivations	Feedback Defined	Gaining Commitment Stage	Using Sales Process to Build Relationships
Communication Styles	Six-Step Process	Introduction to Planning	Fact, Need, & Implication Questions	Benefits	Asking for Feedback	Asking for Commitment	Building Long-term Relationships
Rapport	Impact-Benefit Statements	Opening the Sales Call	Needs	Price, Cost, and Value	Types of Feedback	Gaining Commitment Techniques	Loyalty Stages
Active Listening	Company Capability Statements		Economic Consequences	Features, Advantages, and Benefits	Positive Feedback	When to Ask for Commitment	Creating Advocates
Using Your Voice	Handling Resistance			Reinforcing Benefits	Negative Feedback	Negotiating	Setting Expectations
				Value-Added Benefits	Customer Objections		Recovering When Things Go Wrong
				Quantifying Benefits	Managing Objections		

Developing Phase III, which started in early 2014, required selecting the key concepts, removing any dependencies of those concepts on other topics, and writing concise scripts for delivery by professional voice talent. The company’s senior director of learning and development volunteered his voice for the customer side of examples of sales conversations in the course, thereby adding a realistic element to the training. The final course, delivered as SCORM 1.2 files, included 3 hours of

professional audio and had a total run time of 3.5 hours to include time for the participants to engage in the interactions embedded in the course.

Once Phase III was developed, sales managers became very interested in using a topic or two of its on-demand sales training in their team meetings to keep sales skills sharp and promote discussion of sales best practices.

As Phase III reached its publication date, the company recognized a critical element for the success of the sales training project: Sales reps spend 90% of their work time on the road calling on customers. So how could the company make the training accessible to reps in the field?

The company decided to use their new communication server, a hosted video site, to meet this need in Phase IV, started as Phase III finished in spring of 2014. This decision would let the reps use mobile learning for just-in-time instruction on their mobile devices (either iPads, smart phones, etc.) while they were on the road.

The remote-access videos in Phase IV required an MP4 file format. SRG was able to take the SCORM files developed in Phase III, remove any interaction instructions, then “play” the interactions to produce 59 MP4 videos, or 3 hours of mobile training content. Once again, the reps had access to an easy-to-use interface to select a topic. And to quickly give the reps the information they needed, most videos were relatively short (less than 2 minutes). This offering is especially appealing to Millennials who often prefer self-paced learning and have become inseparable from their mobile devices.

RESULT

By repurposing its content so that training can be delivered as ILT, VILT, and reinforced through OnDemand training modules, the company developed a highly scalable, and effective training program that met the various needs and learning styles of its sales organization.





About Sales Readiness Group

Sales Readiness Group (SRG) is an industry leading sales training company that helps companies develop highly effective sales organizations. Our solutions include comprehensive sales training, sales coaching, and sales management programs that deliver sustainable skills improvement.

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