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Case Study

CHANGE MANAGEMENT: INSTILLING  SALES TECHNIQUES

(RATHER THAN )

Start date: January 2009

End date: In progress

Background

The client is a highly respected, award-winning, world-class specialist recruitment consultancy, established some 20 years and currently with 80 UK-based staff. Services range from contingency placements for entry-level roles, to retained search and selection at board level in most countries in the world.

Denise Walker had previously worked with the client, delivering training to the graduate intake, so we were already aware of the culture and high quality of the business and its employees. This client's consultants are top calibre and are selected very carefully by the MD for the long term, based on their intelligence, culture fit and capabilities. The length of their experience varies from 1 - 30 years in business, recruitment and the specialist sector in which they operate.

Due to the quality of service and an impeccable reputation, this organisation had, for many years, enjoyed the luxury of having business coming to them and the focus had been on service, rather than new business development - "selling". In 2008, the market changed drastically with the recession and it became apparent that the business needed to adapt to this market and that consultants roles should include a higher degree of business development, just as the founder consultants had when the business was first set up.

The challenge

After careful consultation with the directors, we agreed it was important to ensure that: the quality of service would not adversely affected by any new sales practices introduced; the team would be encouraged to buy into the new ideas; the special culture of the organisation would be protected; any new initiatives would fit the needs of the business – this would not be a "one size fits all" solution.

The project goals were to:

- Engender sales methods and activities to suit the business and its clients
- Increase the quality and quantity of sales activities
- Instil synergy and common thought in the overall approach to sales
- Encourage sharing of information and cross-selling
- Build confidence in individuals' sales ability
- Attain a repeatable formula that could be used as the business expands

The solution

We agreed that this should be a year long programme, with ongoing, regular support. It was essential that the style of delivery was consultative and aimed around building on the groups' skills, knowledge, strengths and experiences, so that they could be involved in the development of any initiatives.

An initial list of related subjects to be covered was drawn up, around which training, workshops, coaching and mentoring sessions would be designed. We agreed that this list was likely to evolve as the project progressed.

The delivery of the programme was organised as follows:

- The consultants were organised into 4 groups, of which a Team Leader would be nominated
- Activities were split into quarters:
 - Month 1 – workshops covering the topics for the quarter
 - Month 2 – clinics (mostly question and answer time on the same subjects but also desk-side coaching)
 - Month 3 – “ad-hoc” (whatever was appropriate for the participants, including updates, one-to-ones and desk-side coaching)
- Fortnightly updates with the Team Leaders
- Liaison with the directors for input where appropriate
- Monthly updates with the MD
- Circulation of individual groups' minutes and agreed actions

The outcome to date

June 2009: So far so good!

To date, we have covered a number of key subjects in-depth: consultative sales techniques; differentiators; the qualities of successful consultants; overcoming objections; ownership and accountability; client contact management; sales KPIs; time management; negotiation skills.

The project goals are not only being achieved, they are being further developed. There has been a measurable change in terms of focus on business development and techniques used. Business has been gained in new areas, business with current clients is being maximised and morale has remained high, even in this tough market. We are also working together on some internal reference documents, including a telemarketing guide and negotiation guidelines. In addition to this, a number of projects, owned by individual consultants have been initiated, as new ideas have formed and gathered momentum, during this process.

Of course, the sales related work has been very important in this project but, perhaps equally important, is that the culture of this business and high service levels to clients remain unchanged. The consultants are still valued as individuals and are not expected to be clones; they are playing to their strengths and working as a focused team, whilst adapting to this new type of trading environment.

[Watch this space!](#)