

# absolutely business



## Case Study



### BACK TO BASICS – PERFECTING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

**Start date:** November 2008

**End date:** In progress

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## Background

The client was referred to Denise Walker, initially with a need for in-house training for the small team of consultants. This is a small specialist, UK-based recruitment consultancy, providing staff to most countries. Despite some fantastic successes, staff attrition had been an issue and the MD was keen to grow the business, based on strong, solid foundations, to include well-trained, motivated staff, who remain with the business on a long-term basis.

Following an initial meeting, the MD chose to take advantage of the **business analysis service** to start with. During a day on-site with a number of key staff, the following was examined:

- The vision for the business
- Business performance: turnover; profit; KPIs; conversion rates
- The team: length of service, strengths and limitations; salaries and commission structure; internal recruitment strategy; staff induction, training and development strategy; staff measurement; staff management
- The market: competitors; current market conditions
- Marketing
- Sales: techniques currently used
- Operations and processes: client management; candidate management; job management; timescales and deadlines
- IT systems
- Finance management: bookkeeping; credit management; financial reporting
- Standards: ethics; company values
- Strategic planning: long term goals; annual business planning

The client was subsequently provided with a detailed report, which included comments and advice on specific areas of the business, a SWOT analysis and a summary of current limitations for improvement.

## The challenge

From the business analysis, it was clear that, despite some great strengths, there were key areas that needed to be improved for this business to achieve sustainable growth: service; sales; HR; strategy and business planning. It was going to be important to simultaneously develop the sales team, whilst improving these areas of the business, so that sales performance could be enhanced as soon as possible. The MD was also keen to move the business from providing a mostly telephone-based service to being much more consultative in their approach, which would mean some careful change management.

## The solution

Together with the MD, we decided that Denise Walker should be on site to primarily deliver bespoke desk-side coaching to the consultants in the areas that they needed most. A coaching plan was drawn up with each of them and then implemented during their allocated time each month. Some group training was also delivered and, as the need arose and where appropriate, tools and templates were designed to make the consultants' jobs easier for them to carry out. These were also provided for other areas of the business, such as HR.

In essence, the programme was to be:

- One day per month on site
- Primarily desk-side coaching
- Some group training
- Provision/design of tools
- Weekly updates with the Manager
- Regular updates with the MD

We prioritised the list of areas to improve as follows:

- Service and sales: qualification of clients; business development technique; client contact management; candidate management; job management; quality control; negotiation; KPIs.
- HR: staff recruitment; induction process; appraisals.
- Strategy and business planning: 3-year strategy; annual business planning; aligning strategy with day to day activities.

## The outcome to date

### May 2009: The best month of sales in a year!

To date, we have concentrated on service, sales and HR and work on strategy and business planning is due to commence shortly. The team has embraced the new methodology and this has made them much more effective in their roles; conversion rates have improved drastically and some consultants are breaking records, even in this recession. The team were already working well together and they say that this project, with the joint learning experience and positive outcomes, has helped them bond even more.

The project has evolved as it progressed and Denise is now coaching and mentoring the Manager in people management skills and getting weekly updates on the progression of each individual consultant.

Now that most of the basics are in place, current priorities are:

1. To maintain and build on these achievements, so that they become ingrained and into the culture of the business and habitual for each individual.
2. To ensure that any new people joining are quickly inducted into the new ways of working.
3. To work on the longer-term strategy for the business.

Watch this space!