

# absolutely business



Case study: Change management

Dates: January 2009 - date

A successful UK recruitment consultancy needed to evolve its team to focus on sales due to the tough economic environment without losing clients, staff or impacting on culture and quality.

## Background

The client is a highly respected, award-winning, world-class specialist recruitment consultancy, established some 23 years with 80 UK-based staff. Its client base is global and impressive, including the majority of FTSE 100 organisations.

Denise Walker had previously worked with the client, delivering training for the graduate programme, so we were aware of the culture and high quality of the business. The client prided itself on its people. Staff were selected very carefully, with recruitment based on their intelligence, capabilities and culture fit. The length of consultants' recruitment, sector and overall business experience, varies from one to 30 years.

Due to the quality of service and its impeccable reputation, this organisation had for many years enjoyed the luxury of winning new business through recommendations and word of mouth. Focus was on service alone, with very little new business development activity. However, in 2008, the market changed dramatically with the onset of the recession, and it soon became apparent that the company needed to adapt quickly to these new market conditions.

## The challenge

It was clear that the consultants' roles should now include some focus on business development, just as the founder consultants' roles had originally. Upon meeting with the directors, we agreed it was important to ensure the following: the quality of service to current clients should not be adversely affected by any sales activity; staff would be encouraged to buy into the new ideas; the culture of the organisation would be protected; any finally, new initiatives would fit the needs of the business – this would not be a “one size fits all” solution.

Initial project goals included:

- Introduce sales methods and activities to suit the business and its clients
- Increase the quality and quantity of sales activities
- Encourage sharing of information and cross-selling
- Build confidence in individuals' sales ability
- Introduce a best practice guide which evolves as the business develops.

## 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 teams' extensive skills, knowledge, strengths and experiences. Staff would be encouraged to be involved in the development of any new initiatives.

The delivery of the programme was organised as follows:

- The consultants were put into four groups, of which a 'team leader' was nominated
- Activities varied between workshops, clinics, coaching and mentoring
- Consultants had fortnightly updates with managers, regular consultation with directors and monthly updates with the MD
- Regular follow ups were held.

## The outcome: 'Modern retro' - good old fashioned values - in a modern world

There was not only a clear, measurable change in terms of focus on business development and techniques, but we were also able to enhance other areas of the consultancy. Business was gained in new areas, sales with current clients were enhanced and internally, morale remained high, despite a tough market. We believe this was partly due to the inclusive nature of the project and ownership by the consultants.

Importantly, the culture of this business and high-service levels to clients remained unchanged. Today, the customer is still king and service is top priority. The consultants are still valued as individuals: they specialise in areas that play to their strengths and work as a focussed team.

## Next

We are currently retained by this client for support in the areas of strategic and business planning, talent development and talent management.

### Quote from the MD:

*"I have known Denise since 2003 and we have maintained regular contact with each other over this period. When we first met she had successfully sold her own recruitment business to her management team. Having built this business from scratch she has a truly valuable insight into the industry from many different perspectives.*

*We decided to retain Denise's company, Absolutely Business, in 2009 as we believed we needed to invest in our people during the worst economic down turn in living memory. We did this to ensure that our consultants were at their best at a time that was hugely challenging for them.*

*Her contribution has been consistently outstanding and during what has been the most challenging economic environment we have had to work in as a recruitment business we were able to win new accounts, expand existing accounts and above all maintain a belief within the business that we had more control over our future than the outside trading conditions. I believe and our consultants believe that Denise has played a critical part in our performance over this period and to our continuing success."*