

# absolutely business



**CASE STUDY:** Team building

**Dates:** October 2008 - December 2010

Financial and contract service supplier in the construction industry commissioned Absolutely Business for marketing and business strategy advice. Absolutely Business's successful approach saw the relationship evolve into ongoing team-building support over a two year period.

## Background

The client is a supplier of financial and contract services to the UK construction industry. The business has a set of proven unique selling points, including: a highly credible MD and directors; a distinctive product; in-depth, up-to-date knowledge of the industry and issues that affect it; and top quality service levels - with a number of added-value client benefits.

The company was started in the proverbial "shed at the bottom of the garden" by the MD and two staff. It had evolved so that by 2008, it had a staff of 15, including two sales directors. At this point, the MD was keen to take the company to the next level of professionalism and in order to achieve this he decided to invest in the Cranfield School of Management's Business Growth Programme (BGP), which is where he met Absolutely Business's Denise Walker.

A marketing programme was embarked upon and included a new website; e-marketing; direct mail; PR; presenting through seminars; and forming strategic business alliances.

The MD retained Denise Walker to maximise sales generated through the marketing programme.

## The challenge

From the initial sales workshop, it was clear that this company had some obvious strengths and that good progress had already been made in terms of customer care. For example, the company culture had already moved towards a "can do", flexible approach to client services.

However, there was still more work to be done, specifically around getting the sales and service elements of the business to work cohesively. And, although the MD wanted to "professionalise" the business, it was important not to stray too far from the company's roots and alienate loyal customers.

## The solution

It was decided that an informal, consultative approach would work best, and Denise Walker and Absolutely Business was engaged to work onsite at least every quarter offering:

- Team workshops
- Coaching and consulting
- Regular follow-through

Absolutely Business has subsequently been involved in:

- Sales: shaping the sales strategy; improvement of sales processes and measurement; training, development; coaching and mentoring
- Communication: instilling common focus and cooperation; introduction of internal communication tools; conflict resolution; change management
- HR: design/enhancement of the appraisal format
- Critique of marketing concepts
- Research

## The outcome to date

This project evolved naturally and, once all the basics in terms of sales, service and people were in place, creativity was able to flourish. And, although the initial brief was simply to maximise the sales elements of the business, we did not envisage just how much this would influence team building.

A recent site visit has confirmed that internal communication has significantly improved, through regular team meetings and one-to-one line management meetings. Individuals are confident that they can have input into ideas and issues. Any conflict is now limited through more effective feedback mechanisms. For example, a recent major change in a client process was very carefully managed and the teams were consulted prior to implementation, which was virtually problem-free.

There are now documented sales and marketing strategies working in tandem and all staff are committed to both, with the focus being on a seamless high-end service to customers. This clarity and structure has enabled the directors to instigate further recruitment with successful inductions.

There has also been a bonus scheme introduced for the support staff, to demonstrate their importance in achieving the business's strategic goal – to make the company the best in its market. All staff are aware of how they contribute to making that goal happen and are passionate about their role.

Among the staff there is a strong sense of common focus, unity, mutual appreciation, enthusiasm and excitement throughout the company and this is getting stronger every day.

In a tough economy, sales steadily increased to record levels by November 2009 and continued to do so quarter on quarter. The number of new clients coming on board as a result of the new marketing initiatives or being referred is higher than ever. Profits remain strong, market share is growing and the team is a close knit unit – a real force to be reckoned with.

### Quote from the MD:

*“Our return on investment in appointing Denise to ‘sharpen’ our sales performance is measurable for us in terms of increased client-base (sales), fee income and customer retention.*

*All things considered, I would say the “Denise factor” would account for one third of quantified growth equating to £375,000.”*