

case study

Developing a Sales Academy to become market leader

Summary

Crelos consult in organisational change, working in partnership with clients to provide an end to end solution to support the process of organisational change. In 2005 our client approached Crelos to assist in designing and delivering a talent programme for their top performing sales people.

As experts in organisational change, Crelos set about designing a programme that would not only deliver sales results but also create the right environment for the change to happen, to enable the organisation to meet the needs of the future. The results speak for themselves. Our client reports that approximately £150m of profit has been generated in the last 5 years and the performance of their top talent is some 25% higher than the sales population as a whole.

Setting the scene

Since 2005, our client has faced a number of complex market challenges:-

- A mature mobile market and increased competition presented an increased need to differentiate on truly valuable and unique parameters.
- The rules of the game have evolved, and traditional products and services (handsets, voice and data) have become increasingly commoditised.
- In order to drive maximum value from the new wave of 'joined up communications' products and services, providers needed to move to a consultative selling approach and elevate their customer conversations to the executive team.
- The labour turnover in the sector was high, with competitors keen to attract talented sales people (and their customer relationships)
- In order to deliver a class leading service to its customers, our client realised that the solution may lie in making the most of the talent in its sales force.

Our client saw the opportunity of driving change through its people. The organisation needed to enhance its sales people's productivity and skills set. It also needed to find a way of retaining its top talent. It knew that it had to sell on value, rather than features or price as well as provide the best customer experience on the market.

A world class Sales Academy

Our client embarked on an organisational change programme with the goal of creating a World class and leading edge Sales Academy which was to be the first of its kind in the industry. Crelos were asked to play a leading role in both the design and delivery of a sales talent programme that would raise capability whilst also acting as an important mechanism to improve retention and loyalty of high performers.

The Academy is an award-winning, multi-year skill development programme that is fully integrated into the company's sales management processes. It focuses on developing the consultative selling skills for sales people, providing dynamic behavioural training and support to those operating at the highest level of sales capability and latterly a leadership academy for sales managers.

The Academy is based on a precision development approach and uses a set of researched and validated competency frameworks and progress measurements which are reviewed on a quarterly basis. The academy has four levels 'induction', 'good performance', 'consulting mastery' and 'sales talent'. It makes use of the best training methodologies which include a mix of workshops, coaching, real life customer setting assessment, presentations and personality profiling. It is viewed in our client as a centre of excellence and the model is now being replicated across other operating businesses in Europe.

Our client regularly measures the contribution that the academy has made to the organisation using data from

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the sales people themselves. Our client estimates that approximately £150m of profit has been generated in the last 5 years and the performance of their top talent is some 25% higher than the sales population as a whole.

The next stage – developing high performance leaders

Having established a talent programme for sales stars, our client focused their efforts on addressing the needs of their leaders.

In 2007, Crelos were asked to develop a sales leader programme that would play an important role in enabling the sales force to navigate and deliver in an incredibly challenging marketplace. At the time, the telecoms marketplace was entering a period of high ambiguity as the development of new products and services, along with the commoditisation of traditional mobile channels left many operators without a clear steer on the right route to take. The Sales Leader programme focused on providing the right skills and tools that would empower sales managers and leaders to lead their teams by focusing on personal, team, strategic and sales organisational leadership skills.

The programme architecture has been carefully designed to incorporate some of the existing Sales Academy structure; giving the programme a familiar look and feel. The objectives are to deliver a world class leading service to customers, driven by the best people, supported by world class leadership and management.

Crelos helped understand how to qualify what 'world class' leadership capability looked like in three ways. They undertook considerable internal consultation within the organisation; looked outside at the broader telecoms and communications industry and leveraged research into the psychology of business leadership and high performance.

Once the key principles had been defined, Crelos developed a competency model based on the Schroder model, a well validated and respected high performance behavioural framework.

Benefits

Now, more than five years on, the Academy has helped our client move from third in the corporate market to first. It is the UK's fastest growing network operator and leads the way in customer growth and satisfaction. It is the market's highest-revenue network, as well as the one with the strongest profits, best margins and biggest base of contract customers.

Aside from the financial benefits, there have been other important outcomes.

Customer satisfaction is the most important key performance indicator in our client. In three years, the corporate customer satisfaction index score – for sales and account management – has risen from 67 to 80, which is a market-leading score among mobile operators.

Whilst challenging, the Academy is a valued programme that provides a measurable vehicle for success. The overall competency levels across the 500-strong sales workforce has improved by 40% and sales personnel consistently rate the programme as one of the unique selling points that differentiate our client from its competitors. Internally, the Academy is regarded as a trusted adviser and forms part of the business decision making process.

Our client's people are very proud of being able to benchmark themselves against external standards and are aiming for World Class status in everything they do. So much so that in 2008, the Sales Academy took top spot in the "Best Commercial Training Initiative" category at the Training Journal's annual awards.

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