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Sales Training and Performance

LEADING PRACTICES



Featured Case Studies



redhat.



Introduction

At Brandon Hall Group, we believe that a sales staff's performance is directly tied to learning. Today's customers know what they want, and with the click of a mouse or a tap of a mouse, many of them can research purchases big and small and even customize what they want. But is it really what will serve them best? To help make sure customers make the right purchase, whether they be individual banking customers, drivers looking for that new-car smell or multi-national corporations looking for the best software, a good sales staff must not only know how to sell a product successfully but they must know their own products in and out. At the same time, businesses must make sure they're not wasting time with outdated training methods when their sales staff could be out producing revenue.

Your Sales Training Should Be as Modern as Your Salesforce

Perhaps no function within an organization has benefitted more from the newest wave of technologies than the salesforce. Social technology and advances in mobile apps and devices have put sales professionals closer to their clients than ever before.

Yet in many organizations, sales training consists mainly of big blocks of face-to-face time in training seminars or similar gatherings



In this report we profile four companies — Absa, SAP, Red Hat and GM — that implemented various successful sales training and performance initiatives. Each of these companies is an award-winning organization in the Brandon Hall Group Excellence Awards program, an international competition among hundreds of organizations in which entries are judged by independent subject matter experts and practitioners.

When it comes to today's highly complex software, machinery and financial concepts, diverse sales staff must be able to knowledgeably answer a customer's questions *and* even provide solutions to problem customers might not have even anticipated. The four companies profiled here invested in learning programs to show their sales staff how to build and maintain relationships — not only getting to better know their customers but getting to know their company's own products and services as well. In return, these four leading companies have seen better performance, greater revenue growth and higher Net Promoter Scores.

'Art and Science of Customer Solutioning' Differentiates Absa



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Johannesburg, South Africa
Year Founded	1991
Revenue	R50.094 billion (US \$353,411,532)
Employees	42,000
Industry	Financial Services
Website	www.absa.co.za

The Challenge: To differentiate itself and regain market share, Absa not only needed skilled, competent and engaged staff with the right technical and behavioral competencies but staff who are seen as credible and trusted business partners by customers as well.

The Solution: Create the “Art and Science of Customer Solutioning” (ASCS) to build relationship capabilities, increase skills in establishing, maintaining and growing meaningful relationships with customers and have staff support Absa in building sales enablement and execution to excel in a changing banking environment and drive a turn-around in performance.

Implementation: Have the program consist of three learning journeys (sales manager, relationship executive and credit analyst). Each learning journey is made up of five classroom-based experiences (two months part) that include pre-work, workplace adoption activities, assignments and reinforcement by a people change plan.

Measurable Benefit: Top-line performance increased R21.3 million after the fourth classroom experience (an increase of 4.06%) and the average Net Promoter Score improved nearly 9% between the third and fourth classroom experience. Considering the current trend line, Absa is confident that a 10% uplift in topline revenue is possible once the full target audience has had the chance to absorb and apply the ASCS learnings.

Access to full case study: ['Art and Science of Customer Solutioning' Differentiates Absa from Competitors.](#)

SAP's neGOtiate&WIN Helps Confidentially Win Contracts



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Walldorf, Germany
Year Founded	1972
Revenue	€22.06 billion
Employees	88,500
Industry	Software
Website	www.sap.com

The Challenge: To meet its ambitious revenue goals for 2020, including €7.5 billion to €8 billion in cloud subscriptions and €26 billion to €28 billion in total revenue, SAP needs to rely on its account executives (AEs) to increase the roles as negotiators capable of uncovering needs and bringing value to customers — at a low cost to SAP.

The Solution: Develop the neGOtiate&Win blended learning program — with an emphasis on “go” and “win” — designed to give AEs the skills and tools they need to negotiate with confidence, improve returns and drive SAP’s success.

Implementation: Through virtual and face-to-face learning over three days total, participants learn a clearly defined and efficient negotiation process, become proficient with highly effective negotiation tools and gain new confidence for negotiating with customers. Included is six hours of prework (virtual live training, eLearning MOOCs and skills assessment), two days of live classroom training and two hours of post-work (including online coaching, four rapid eLearning modules and an application/business impact survey).

Measurable Benefit: When comparing participant performance before and after training, significant improvements were seen across each of SAP’s KPIs, including a 15.2% reduction in discounts, a nearly 6% increase in revenue generation (equal to more than €250,000 per carrier quota) and a more than 5.6% increase in deal size. SAP’s participant surveys also have yielded extremely positive results, including a 4.4/5 satisfaction rating.

Access to full case study: [SAP’s NeGOtiate&WIN Provides Skills to Confidentially Win Contracts.](#)

Red Hat's Accreditation Program Leads Sales Force to Success



Company At-a-Glance

Headquarters	Raleigh, North Carolina
Year Founded	1993
Revenue	\$3 billion
Employees	11,000-plus
Industry	Software
Website	www.redhat.com

The Challenge: How to properly educate and inform the sales team to ensure they are able to accurately identify and address client challenges — especially when it comes to Red Hat's OpenShift Container Platform, which unites developers and IT operations on a single platform to build, deploy and manage applications across hybrid cloud infrastructures?

The Solution: Invest in a continuing development initiative to provide global sales professionals with learning and behavioral change experiences designed to maximize the value and effectiveness of customer interactions, specifically regarding container technology.

Implementation: Red Hat's Winning with Containers Sales Accreditation Program is a three-phase program that blends eLearning, sales messaging practice and account-planning activities to nurture behavioral changes. The core learning and development strategy is rooted in business-centric principles that address agility, industry relevance, customer value, learner engagement and knowledge retention through eLearning courses, assessments, practice labs, applied learning, job aids and additional resources.

Measurable Benefit: Of the 1,071 sales professionals who have completed the program, 50% (536) have already found at least one new container-related opportunity and 10% of those opportunities have been closed with an average sales price of \$25,000. Red Hat has conservatively estimated a revenue increase of \$1,339,000 for its current fiscal quarter.

Access to full case study: [Red Hat's Accreditation Program Leads Sales Force to Success.](#)

GM's 'Find New Roads' Experience Raises Enthusiasm, Sales



Company At-a-Glance

Headquarters	Detroit, Michigan
Year Founded	1908
Revenue	\$145.6 billion (2017)
Employees	225,000
Industry	Automotive
Website	www.gm.com

The Challenge: With General Motors' Chevrolet brand launch of several new vehicles in 2017, including the Bolt EV, Equinox, Traverse, Colorado ZR2, Corvette Grand Sport and Camaro ZL1, GM needed to ensure that its sales force was ready to sell with the right knowledge and enthusiasm.

The Solution: The Chevrolet marketing team partnered with GM's Center of Learning (the retail training organization within GM) to create the "Find New Roads" event to showcase the technologies, features and benefits and competitive advantages of the new products.

Implementation: The "Find New Roads" program reached Chevrolet's five biggest markets with several multi-day events in each market. It also required the design and development of interactive content for each vehicle with a focus on the technology features. Events were held at five speedways across the US. To allow for maximum participation, two waves were held at each location and each wave consisted of a one-day session for dealer management, followed by a two-day session for sales consultants. Training components included a hands-on driving experience, interactive learning labs and a "cargo game" to showcase the Traverse's superior cargo room.

Measurable Benefit: Dealerships attending the events showed a greater increase in sales (1.9%) than non-attendees (0.3%). This difference in year-over-year sales gains amounted to approximately 7,100 more sales of the featured vehicles, equating to \$49.7 million in gross profits for General Motors.

Access to full case study: [GM's Find New Roads Experience Raises Enthusiasm, Sales.](#)

Contributors

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About Brandon Hall Group

Brandon Hall Group is an HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and HR/Workforce Management. With more than 10,000 clients globally and more than 25 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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For more information, contact us at success@brandonhall.com.