



9th Edition | SALES COACHING
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**INTERNATIONAL
COACHING
NEWS**

“YES, WE CAN!”

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**What's its Purpose?
Is it Relevant for my Practice**

Irene Tubbs

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Message from the iCN Division Head

Happy New Year! Let us welcome 2015 with another exciting edition of the International Coaching News (iCN) online magazine! For our 9th edition our theme is Sales Coaching, inspired by the significant challenges and the need for selling in the coaching community.

This edition is loaded with content on a variety of relevant topics such as developing sales approaches and techniques that are suited to individual's personality types.

The ICN is proud to have collaborated with several renowned international columnists, expert coaches and best-selling authors to provide insights on sales coaching. In this edition it contains some content definitely worth a read, for example a **Case Study – Coaching in the Workplace** by **Malcolm Nicholson** from United Kingdom, taken from an interview between Malcolm and Martin Brommell, Sales Excellence Coach, where he provides an excellent sales programme to help people achieve their full potential and be the best they can be in order to win in the marketplace. In **Developing your Sales Skills** by **Laureen Quick** from United States, Laureen, reminds us about the three foundational skills required in sales, which are: the ability to bounce back from rejections, the personal connection with not only the people we are selling to but with our colleagues too, and lastly the ability to think on our feet. Another noteworthy article is **When the selling gets tough, the tough get selling** where **Silvia Bailes** from South Africa, gives us insights on enriching our soft skills in the selling journey and optimizing our personal brands as well as the services or products we provide. **You're a Matchmaker NOT a Sales Person! Soft Selling Skills for Coaches** by **Patti Pokorchak** from Canada, draws on the steps to effective face-to-face meetings for coaches. From our iCN Journalist in Romania **Nicoleta Cristina Burca** "Yes, we can!" **Market Trends of Female Leaders in Romania - An Interview with Bianca Corau**, who believes that ambition, energy and passion are the three attributes that one should possess in order to be successful both in career and personal life. Each of our columnists, too numerous to mention, have taken some really interesting perspectives, and I would encourage a thorough read-through this edition.

Just like all our other editions, this edition is not just an interesting read, but it provides you with helpful coaching tools, personal development ideas and professional development techniques to grow your business.



We hope you enjoy this edition and I look forward to receiving your feedback!

Best wishes,

Leeann

Leeann C. Naidoo
iCN Division Head



Case Study Coaching in the WORKPLACE

by Malcolm Nicholson
(United Kingdom)

The following article is taken from an interview between Malcolm Nicholson and Martin Brommell, Sales Excellence Coach with BT in the UK. Martin was previously a sales manager in BT, an ideal background for his current role.

The world is being transformed by communications. BT is a communications company and their purpose is to use the power of communications to make a better world. These days, life and work is built around connectivity. Through BT, millions of individuals connect to friends and family, and have a wealth of information and entertainment at their fingertips. From small local businesses right through to large multinationals, BT helps companies to work smarter and compete in global markets. They also enable essential public services to be delivered, and underpin the growth of national and regional economies.

Growing People and Businesses

At BT, they believe that people want to work with a company that supports an individual's ability to grow

and is a positive force in the communities where it operates. Whether it's by making connectivity accessible wherever it's needed, helping customers to become more energy-efficient or looking for new ways to make healthcare or education more effective, BT is committed to growing a successful business and delivering to their shareholders by being valuable to customers and society. These beliefs are what drive BT as a company and that extends into the way in which they support the development of their people.

Sales Excellence Programme

During the past 3 years BT has made a major investment in training and development for its sales community, delivering a programme called Sales Excellence with the aim of improving sales efficiency.



Why coach?

- Keep employees motivated during change
- Give managers skills to support strategy
- Move from a 'tell' culture
- Build development capabilities / innovate
- Retain best people
- Reduce stress related absence
- Engage with the company culture, vision & values
- Organisational Performance and Health
- Take responsibility and set own goals

Specific aims of the Sales Excellence Programme are to provide experienced sales people in the company with the level of advanced skills and knowledge that is required to differentiate BT when pursuing major ICT transformational deals.

How does it work?

The first step in the programme is to conduct a full evaluation of each sales person to establish base competencies and capabilities. This is followed by an extensive training programme which helps to up-skill the sales people and their managers to use tried and tested tools and techniques during sales negotiations or coaching sessions.

The coaching and learning focuses on 4 key themes:

- Establishing trust, rapport, a common agenda and credibility with strategic C-level client personnel by applying proven consultative selling, analytical and inter-personal skills
- Developing and delivering strategic solutions for competitive advantage
- Sharing learning and leveraging the collective expertise of other colleagues
- Driving a greater awareness of the key sales skills that differentiate top performers

Following the initial training, BT has implemented a programme of sales coaching, delivered by a team of highly trained coaching specialists who work with the frontline sales managers and their teams to ensure the learning is embedded until it becomes a habit.

“Having the coaches go through the same training streams as the sales managers and sales people has really helped them to understand the whole experience and to support embedding of a coaching culture within the sales community”, said Martin Brommell, one of the Sales Excellence Coaches.

The Sales Excellence Journey



Better, however you measure it

Brommell continued “Sometimes it is difficult to measure the impact that a change programme has on a business, but in this case we are looking at a sales function on a year on year basis. If anything, the ICT and telecommunications markets are becoming tougher, customers are becoming more demanding and products are less margin rich as we move away from traditional technologies. However, since the introduction of the Sales Excellence programme, we are in better shape than we were last year across our full range of metrics relating to the sales experience, including productivity and customer satisfaction. For example, our sales pipeline has grown by 15%, sales conversion rates have increased by 8% and there has also been a positive increase of 1.7% in employee engagement scores as measured by an internally conducted employee satisfaction survey called CARE.”

The Sales Excellence Coaches

Brommell and his peers, of which there are 5 in the UK, work predominantly with the sales managers as the primary point of intervention. The Sales Excellence coaches help sales managers to understand how best to coach and motivate their sales people and how to receive feedback themselves. This approach is making a significant impact on the business.

The coaches are acknowledged by the sales teams as adding value by bringing together their experience and understanding of the sales process with what was required to change behaviours. With the programme now in its fourth year, Brommell reports that the majority of sales managers and sales people regularly approach him asking for ideas or further help which is really encouraging.

“In today’s marketplace, everyone in the sales process needs to develop quality relationships with customers but also be able to manage a virtual team within their organisation. The application for example of Tuckman’s “4 Stage Model” has helped considerably in the sales teams understanding how to get the best out of a virtual, project based and time defined team who don’t report directly to them.”

The sales teams are encouraged to develop an elevator pitch using a model known as SVP or Sales Value Proposition. They are constantly reminded of Covey’s mantra that skills, knowledge and attitude are required to create a habit as described by Stephen R Covey in his book “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People”.

Sales Excellence is the glue...

The Sales Excellence Programme has given the sales community a common language, consistent methodology and a coaching culture which is driving benefits both for the individual and for BT.

“BT makes sure that the coaches are kept up to date with the latest thinking from external sources as well as encouraging the team to bring their own experience and knowledge to drive a culture of continuous improvement,” said Brommell. For example, he is working with colleagues to develop a ‘Direction of Travel’ tool, which pulls together the sales journey into a coaching road map looking at the entire end to end sales including customer satisfaction.

“The Sales Excellence programme is all about helping people to achieve their full potential and be the best they can be in order to win in the marketplace. The combination of meaningful training and embedding the learning through a sustained coaching programme is ensuring that BT meets those aims and continues to deliver for its’ customers.”



The interview was conducted by Malcolm Nicholson, Coaching Director of Aspecture (see www.aspecture.com). He can be contacted at malcolmnicholson@aspecture.com or on +44 1932 267597.

SALES COACHING:



Cometh the Hour, Cometh the Coach

by Malcolm Nicholson
(United Kingdom)

The economies of most of the western world are now firmly on the road to recovery. Sales professionals need to adapt to cope with the volatile circumstances that their customers are facing. How does coaching fit in with this? Successful businesses the need to develop sales professionals who are trusted advisors and knowledgeable consultants.

Businesses are facing a Global VUCA future (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex & Ambiguous). Their requirements will consequently change – and pretty rapidly compared to the recent past. Interconnectedness affects us all.

Let's start by looking at the challenges facing sales organisations currently. Right now the standard model is to service larger organizations through face-to-face sales channels whilst small companies and repeat orders are handled through telesales. These sales resources are expensive and are custodians of a critical relationship with the organisation's customers. How they behave, operate and perform directly impacts the business success. As the market changes so MUST the sales team. The banking crisis of 2009-2010 acted as a catalyst to accelerate a number of changes that were already underway:-

Customers want more for less. And this is at a time when many raw materials are becoming more finite and therefore expensive, or demand from developing nations is increasing the price.

THE INTERNET IS IMPACTING THREE MAIN AREAS WITHIN THE SALES FUNCTION.

FIRSTLY, customers will have researched the marketplace. They will have an opinion. This may not be accurate or correct, however they have an opinion, stronger than they did previously. This could include the price for which they are prepared to pay.

SECONDLY, customers want the revolution that has been brought about by 1-Click online shopping in consumer sales replicated in the business to business sales environment for simple or repeat orders.

THIRDLY, customers are more aware of and comfortable having virtual interactions. Web or video conferences can pull together product expertise from around the world at short notice. Ease of doing business will be a critical differentiator.



Organisations are experiencing greater legislation. Within financial services and the public sector, there is a major drive towards legislation in compliance. All companies now have to work within some form of bribery and anti-corruption legislation and are criminally culpable for acts committed without their knowledge by employees or company representatives. This becomes especially complex in emerging markets where non-western business norms apply to “opening doors”. Additionally, many organizations are aware of the need to display ethical selling practices. There is a creative tension caused by the need to operate within a regulated environment whilst not removing the

entrepreneurial element.

What do the Sales Director and HR Director of today need to change to deal with this landscape?

Old fashioned Hire and fire performance management doesn't work, as it is expensive, destabilising and damages relationships that may have taken years of investment to establish. Therefore, sales leaders need to understand their role is to help their teams evolve to where the market and the company needs them performing as trusted advisors, knowledgeable consultants and the first call the customer makes.

Whilst potential or existing customers have access to more than 20% more information about your business than they did 5 years ago, what they don't necessarily have is the contextual information around a product or service. So the 'how to apply' information around best practices, the trends in the industry and creative solutions - maybe even involving third party organizations - is becoming more valued by customers and is the differentiator over competitors and simple web sales.



Consequently, there is a need to make sure that the sales team's knowledge is greater than the customer's in this context. The traditional 'lone wolf' salesperson needs to develop the ability to manage a virtual team of resource from their offices to make sure they have appropriate sources of up to date data as well as pull together complex bids in order to become value add Subject Matter Experts.

Implementation of technology to enable one click ordering - as with an Amazon purchase - for simple or repeat orders will also be a key differentiator, which will also have an impact on the sales professional's role.

Sounds complex? It is. And of course it will get more so.

So how do leaders meld the entrepreneurial and flexible with the framework of process and legislation, when 70% of change initiatives fail?

Cometh the hour, cometh the approach. Coaching may not scream out bottom line but it certainly delivers it. "Coaching at its best, informed by good theory and practices and case studies around ...business, is brilliant and uniquely placed to encourage people into new kinds of conversations that deepen and build their cognitive capacity and enable them to make sense out of circumstances that are extremely complex." (Dr Geoffrey Abbott, from interview with the author, ICN, 2nd edition)

Not all team members will or can make the journey so the sales director's role and competency set must now include coaching, mentoring and change management. These are not always the skills or traits that these leaders have honed over many years as they built their careers, but they are now at the core of their career success for the future.

A flexible, probing approach is required to react to market vicissitudes. Executive coaching methodologies can promote the cognitive complexity needed in executives, consequently better equipping them to tackle uncertainty. It can provide an avenue for people to explore the inter relationships with the different forces that are going on at the moment, and to deal with the changing environment in a very broad way.

There is a growing body of empirical evidence on the impact of coaching on sales. Anecdotal examples can be taken from my own practice. A proposal I submitted to a capital equipment business required a 0.002% increase in revenue performance to pay for itself. A sales director credited me with having been the catalyst to changing the business from a £200M to a £400M turnover business.

So executive coaching at a leadership level will

provide the space to develop cognitively complex strategic approaches. Now, if we go down a layer in the organisation, we get to the space that should be occupied by The Manager as Coach. Research by CEB (a leading member-based advisory company), shows that sales professionals with highly effective coaches had on average 20% higher goal attainment than those with less effective coaches. They found there are specific skills that set these highly effective coaches apart, including their ability to prepare for the coaching conversation, observe and pinpoint specific behaviours to develop, and embed the new behaviours using actionable feedback.

Continuously developing the ability of the sales team

is a key enabler for business growth. The ability to develop the Industry expert, who is able to prove the insights a web based sale can't, will be accelerated by the manager understanding the individual, tailoring an approach to that person based on feedback and having great conversations to deliver great results.

Going forward, the value that coaching can bring to a discipline that is in change, in industries that are in change, in economies that are in change cannot be underestimated. Combined with ongoing feedback it will continuously change behaviour and so strengthen relationships with the sales team, virtual team and customers. It could actually prove to be the most critical skill the business can have.



Recommended Reading

Sales Coaching: Making the Great Leap from Sales Manager to Sales Coach. Linda Richardson McGraw-Hill Professional; 2nd edition (1 Jan 2009)

The Challenger Sale: Taking Control of the Customer Conversation. Matthew Dixon and Brent Adamson. Portfolio Penguin (7 Feb 2013)

'Sales Coaching at Work' Malcolm Nicholson. *ibid.*



About the Author

Malcolm Nicholson is the owner and Coaching Director for Aspecture, and has worked successfully with a wide range of senior business people for over 15 years, enabling them to improve business results through transformational changes. (see www.aspecture.com). To find out how he can help your organization contact him at malcolmnicholson@aspecture.com or on +44 1932 267597.