

# insights



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Are your sales managers punching their weight?

Our previous issue looked at some of the questions which diagnose sales deficiencies. This issue focuses on managers in a large bank, completes those insights and spells out the key steps in a sales effectiveness diagnosis.

You may recognise the situation. The basics are in place (good brand, competitive products, better than average marketing etc) but sales levels, in spite of good patches, are not consistent. You wonder why. You may have made frequent attempts to create the elusive **Sales Culture** and some progress has been made. Knowing how to put your finger on the elements which are missing or misfiring is very important but also very difficult. A structured approach can help.

A holistic diagnosis involves asking the sorts of tough questions set out below. In this case the results for the bank were quickly significant.



Do management structures and staff roles in all customer facing channels reinforce desired sales practices?

Perfect management structures don't exist. Channel responsibilities and territories vary, local markets can differ substantially and managers' abilities are also highly variable. Clearly, roles, responsibilities and spans of control must be defined to give managers and staff the best chance of success. But, although poorly structured territories can impede sales effectiveness they are rarely a show stopper.

This bank's restructuring two years previously, although not ideal in hindsight, meant management structures were excluded from our diagnostic review. It was better to live with the inadequacies than face the turmoil of more restructuring and role revisions.

Recent role innovations, however, were more easily modified to drive up performance.

In particular, the bank had introduced a 'Meeter-Greeter' role to the larger, busier branches. The highly customer orientated people chosen for these roles focused on responding personally to customers' enquiries and needs. As a consequence, they were frequently away from their post 'getting things done'. The result – a maximum of 40% of customers were greeted, promised branch efficiencies were never achieved and many important service and sales opportunities went begging.

The client needed to refocus and redesign the role, create a new 'customer engagement' model and reskilling of managers and staff. As a result, sales and service efficiency were dramatically improved in a matter of weeks.

**“A maximum of 40% of customers were greeted by the people assigned to this new key role.”**



### Are all sales managers clear about those priority activities that truly drive sales?

High performing managers rarely know why they are successful. Unsuccessful managers tend to have even less idea about why they under perform. And yet, analysis of high performers indicates a clear pattern. Just like winning sports teams, high performing sales teams execute a series of activities which significantly increase their success when repeated skillfully and regularly.

In this case, close observation of a cross section of sellers and their managers revealed wide variations in the way front line staff handled similar (often basic) customer situations. And in the way managers went about improving

sales activities. We worked with the bank to establish the must do sales activities and what 'good looks like'. For example, we helped define and implement a daily, informal yet very focused, sales meeting. Held in both branch and contact centres, for a maximum of ten minutes these 'huddles' energised and focused all staff on the goals and activities for that day. Despite initial scepticism, this one activity was responsible for adjusting management and staff activity to a daily, rather than weekly or monthly timeframe and was credited with 'transforming our approach to personal, needs-based selling'

“Daily sales meetings transformed our approach.”



### Do reward systems reinforce behaviours which benefit customers and the business?

Regulatory pressures mean that banks need to take great care with incentive systems. At the same time results oriented rewards are proven to deliver results. But approaches which truly motivate staff to do the right things are notoriously difficult to design and implement. Poorly designed, they can even be counter productive.

In this case call centre staff were encouraged to provide leads to the branch network and measured on how well they did this. But they were not rewarded for doing so. However,

rewards for branch based sellers who converted the leads were significant.

Once this anomaly became clear to the call centre staff the volume of leads and motivation declined.

It was not too difficult to modify the system within the call centre to reward agents based on successful referrals but also to provide recognition for their work. Indeed, the feeling of working and achieving as a team was (nearly) as important as the extra money earned.

“Working as a team was as important as the extra money earned.”



### Does the training process deliver the high level of skills needed to support the organisation's sales targets?

Most executives recognise the need for continuing, high quality training. Even in hard times, budgets for training are preserved because of the potential benefits. However, volume is not the same as effectiveness and demonstrable business results are talked about more often than they are delivered.

Our client was a believer in the power of training and proud of the significant investments made. Their courses were well run and appreciated by the staff. But observation of staff dealing with customers showed that basic skills were still in short supply. Few probing questions got asked; even experienced, dedicated sales staff spent too much time talking about products and handing out brochures; line managers, other

than for regulation purposes, rarely observed sellers and referrers to give insightful feedback.

We helped the bank rethink its approach to skill building with a 'focus on business results'. In practice this meant focusing the development of skills ruthlessly on achieving targeted business results; ensuring that line managers (not trainers) delivered key programmes; insisting that managers demonstrated what they were teaching their staff on job; making repeated practice a mandatory part of training and then certifying all course participants, as a team, in the skills they were learning. As well as reducing overall costs, senior management could now see the results achieved because they were personally responsible for certifying their people!

“Few sales managers know what good looks like.”

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