

WINNING EDGE

The ultimate challenge?



Have you concluded that issues of salesforce effectiveness and efficiency cannot be solved purely by training or by an extra 'carrot' or 'stick'? Have you considered whether you have the best recruitment process, why your team does not use its CRM system, how you should co-ordinate sales activity with marketing campaigns, and if your commission scheme supports your sales strategy?

If the answers to these questions point to a need for change in most of your sales processes and their integration with the rest of the business, then you are probably looking at implementing a full sales change programme. Beware! Don't underestimate the magnitude of the task, as 75 per cent of change programmes fail.

A change programme usually faces resistance and force to maintain the status quo. With such programmes you also have to manage a high level of subjectivity and ensure even greater collaboration – due to the individual's physical remoteness, presenting practical challenges of involving and communicating with sales teams. The self-driven and self-reliant nature of salespeople means they will always try to 'do things their way'.

Sales change programmes need a well articulated and compelling vision. It is the measure and touchstone from which all other decisions are made. A vision should be a relevant, attainable challenge, backed by a strong justification for the change and joint working with the team to determine how objectives should be implemented.

Extensive sales change programmes must have:

- Senior management sponsorship as a key priority
- Measures of success to give clarity and meaning
- Involvement and commitment of middle management
- A relevant internal brand name and image
- A prominent – sponsored – launch
- A robust multimedia communications and feedback plan
- Programme management through a steering group and dedicated experienced project manager.

When implemented well, the tangible rewards of revenues and profitability can be immense, but the measures of success go beyond tangible terms – especially when working in markets that are in 'slowdown'. Following successful sales change programmes, we have witnessed a greater sense of purpose and unity, brought about through a new and integrated approach to the whole business. Individual and team satisfaction improves dramatically. Motivation is heightened through a sense of pride from the association with a company and its leadership that has invested in such far-reaching change programmes. This embeds a true sales culture. ■

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