



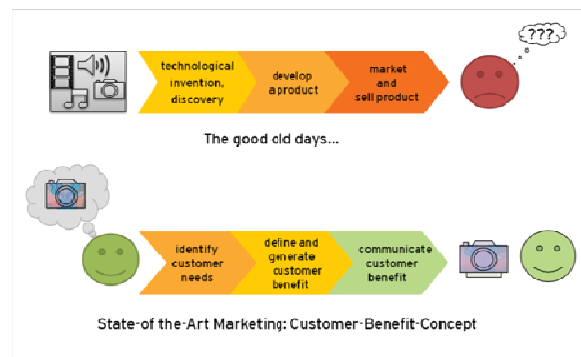
CONSULTATIVE SELLING FOR ENGINEERS

Communication, negotiation, and interpersonal skills training to improve the sales team's effectiveness

An international engineering and technical consulting firm has a sales-team with mostly technical background and excellent skills and knowledge around products and services. However, the management felt that people skills, communication skills and the sales process as such had some potential for improvement. The need for a consultative selling approach became apparent after the company had decided to focus on the sales of more complex technical solutions including a wider range of consulting services. We were asked to develop a training concept for the sales manager to improve their abilities in the above mentioned areas. We started by applying the customer benefit concept and tailored some training modules to strengthen the basics of communication, to use personality types to better understand yourself and your counterparts, to apply systematic questioning and to improve negotiation skills. The increased ability of the sale managers to develop in depth understanding of their customer's needs and to respond to those, led to record sales in the years following.

Situation and Challenge

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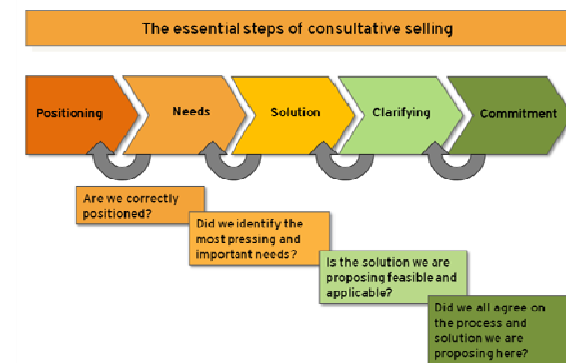
Approach and Solution

The development program for the sales team started with a presentation, discussion, and internalization of the customer-benefit-concept (see chart). The CBC demands that in every discussion with a

customer the sales agent should be aware of the customer's needs expressed and deliverables and suitable benefits to fulfill those needs. It requires excellent people skills to identify the needs of the individual customer quickly and to respond to those adequately and successfully.

The four modules we developed for our Client to improve the necessary people skills were:

- ▶ **Module 1: The basics of communication:** Understanding how communication and influencing others works; verbal vs. non-verbal communication, 4 aspects (ears) of a message
- ▶ **Module 2: Personality types and influencing techniques** Knowing different personality typing approaches, Applying the Riemann-model; Personality-types and the different aspects of a message; Using different techniques to influence different personality-types
- ▶ **Module 3: Sales is a project not an art** Consultative selling process, AIDA (Attention-Interest-Desire-Action)-concept and FAIR-questioning.
- ▶ **Module 4: Closing the deal - negotiation skills** Understanding and applying the Harvard-Concept on negotiations and the BATNA-concept.



All aspects of the modules had three phases:

- ▶ A short theoretical introduction
- ▶ Group-work, role play, or exercise
- ▶ Feedback by peers and trainers and joint reflection on topic

Results

- ▶ Record sales in the two following years (2007 and 2008).
- ▶ Improved team-spirit and team understanding by knowing and understanding the personality type of the other team-members.
- ▶ Focus on customer benefits in sales process.