



“We were attempting to completely change the culture within our organisation. It was bold, brave and radical.”

First Choice had what they thought was an effective performance management structure in place, a coaching programme, measures and targets, a competency framework, a motivating bonus and incentive scheme, and yet conversion rates had been static for two years. They wanted to do better. To be the best. But would everyone welcome the necessary cultural changes?

They needed to inject some life back into the call centre and re energise their staff. Their ultimate aim was to improve customer service, increase sales conversion rates, and increase revenue by 10%. This level of organisational development required a bold approach, but it was vital that whatever they did was also sustainable. Says Rachel Williams, Call Centre Operations Manager at First Choice National Sales Centre, *“The programme needed to be simple*

enough to implement and sustain in the long term. It had to provide management, team managers and the training team with the skills required to deliver effective performance management and sales training, as well as an infrastructure they could manage and maintain.”

Securing the Board's backing

A performance evaluation highlighted the effects of poor sales and service. Crucially, it provided the necessary evidence to secure the backing of the First Choice Board and the required investment. This wasn't a comfortable time; having to admit there were problems inevitably exposed the management team, but it meant senior management took ownership of the programme, which proved vital to its success and sustainability.

In addition the evaluation revealed that staff were selling selectively to maximise their bonuses. Many were confused

by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets, call guides were not adhered to, and team leaders were task-focused, preferring to deliver quantity rather than quality.

As part of the organisational development programme, branded 'Re-energise', every member of staff, including senior managers and team leaders went through training in effective selling, building rapport and closing a sale. Management training workshops developed coaching skills and performance management, along with a train the trainer programme enabled the First Choice team to take responsibility for delivering the new training programme.

Open and honest communication

The positive impact was instant, but there were difficulties ahead. New performance management measures were identifying poor performers who had previously gone unchallenged. The radical new culture gave management the confidence, ability and evidence to identify poor performance and take appropriate action, which although long overdue, inevitably caused upsets. *"We were attempting to completely change the culture within our organisation creating disturbance in an already well-established environment," explains Rachel.*

Staff seen as barriers to change were invited to become Sounding Board representatives, feeding back ideas and comments from the sales advisers. Through consistent regular, open and honest communication, most were won over.

There's no doubt the programme wouldn't have been as successful without the courage and commitment of the senior management team.

Rewarding best practice

The confusing bonus scheme and KPIs were reworked to reward best practice, cutting out the selective and aggressive selling that had eroded customer service. This re-focus helped increase sales conversion rates for First Choice Direct by 10% year on year. The Eclipse Direct brand saw a 25% year on year increase. 97% of staff increased their performance month on month and were driving sales in key areas, such as ancillary products.

There's no doubt the programme wouldn't have been as successful without the courage and commitment of the senior management team. They even spent time on the phones alongside sales advisers to demonstrate the behaviours they expected from staff

and to foster comradeship.

The Re-energise programme not only delivered outstanding performance improvements, it proved superb value for money, delivering an impressive 1,200% return on investment.

It gained customer approval too. One customer commented, *"I will always book with Eclipse, you made me feel really important."*

The programme also won two Training Journal Awards for Best Externally Developed and Delivered Programme and the second for Outstanding Achievement..

For further information please contact:

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