

Case Study: How Learning and Development can support change and drive business



The client

InTechnology plc provides innovative IT infrastructure solutions, products and services to business through a network of value-added resellers, systems integrators and consultants.

The challenge

InTechnology had a complex selling model – each Distribution Account Director represented specific suppliers; each InTechnology customer, therefore, had to deal with several Distribution Account Directors. This was wasteful of time and resources for InTechnology and a potential source of irritation to the customer who wanted a single point of contact with the company. What was the right account director model for the business InTechnology was in? How could it be implemented and how could the new account directors be supported to deliver in their new role?

Approach and solution

The first step was to identify areas for learning and development and develop a programme to ensure Distribution Account Directors had the skills they needed to succeed in their new role. The programme aimed to enable Distribution Account Directors to generate more business from their designated accounts. Developed by Futurecurve, the programme identified areas for learning and development: technical and product knowledge across InTechnology's entire portfolio; in-depth knowledge and understanding of the customer, their business and their market; account management skills and ability to write business and account plans; commercial and financial skills; communication and interpersonal skills.

The programme took place over a period of 10 months using a balance of company time and personal time. The content was presented through a variety of formats including workshops, seminars, lectures and presentations. The modules included Technical Training, Business Awareness, Account Management, Commercial and Financial Skills and Communication Skills.

Following the completion of the course, participants had access to six months' of coaching to help to reinforce what they learned. This was a particularly important part of the programme. A study by Xerox Corp. has shown that, in the absence of follow-up coaching, 87% of skills changes brought about by a learning and development programme can be lost. In addition, research by The Sales Executive Council shows that "when training is complemented (by) in-field coaching and reinforcement, productivity is quadrupled, from 22% to 88%." (From Building a World Class Coaching Organization, p. 32)

For further information on the benefits of coaching see [The Case for Coaching making evidence-based decisions](#), by Jessica Jarvis, David A. Lane and Annette Fillery-Travis and published by CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2006).

Results and benefits

As a result of the redefinition of the Distribution Account Director role and the Learning and Development programme, Distribution Account Directors became "technology agnostic". This ensured that InTechnology clients were given the best solution regardless of supplier.

Distribution Account Directors benefited by developing their business skills and acumen and improving their commercial understanding.

"Futurecurve put together an excellent programme that drove incremental business. Good solid work." Steve Cowlin, formerly Divisional Director, InTechnology Plc

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