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A Vendor-Provided Case Study

Behavioral-Based Training: Improving Relationships Through Communication



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Companies want to be the best at making their customers happy. Comprehensive research is conducted to understand a customer's choices, feelings, and behavior. As instrumental as that is to the success of a business, it's like the saying goes, "Our greatest asset is our people." In order to improve customer service, as well as many other aspects, a company must invest in its people. What it does to ensure professional, productive, and successful employees is vital to its success.

In order to build better relationships and communication structures among employees and with customers, Sony Electronics Inc. Business Solutions and Systems Company (Sony) has been providing behavioral-based training to more than 1000 of its employees for the past seven years. The training and executive coaching have been provided by Sue Beyer, president of Operations Service Systems (OSS), and a national speaker, trainer, and performance consultant who delivers strategies for personal and professional success in the areas of communication, sales, management, and service excellence.

The training provided by Beyer is based on the concept of understanding self, understanding others, and recognizing the impact of personal behavior in the workplace. Understanding of self and others helps employees communicate and work together more effectively, creating a more productive workforce. This integrated approach to performance improvement is part of the DiSC Dimensions of Behavior learning approach from Inscape Publishing. DiSC provides a nonjudgmental language for exploring behavioral issues and allows people to explore behavior across these primary dimensions: dominance, influence, steadiness, and conscientiousness.

Last year, Beyer provided behavioral-

based training to more than 250 employees who attended Sony's 2002 Business Conference, an annual event to kick off the new fiscal year. The conference, held at the Disney Beach & Yacht Resort, was attended by employees from all levels and areas of the business—from customer service reps to executive vice presidents.

"I knew the training would be a cornerstone for building more effective teams, improving communication, and resolving conflict," notes John Scarcella, senior vice president, eastern zone, Consumer Sales Company. "Having previously undergone the training in a smaller group, I was excited to see the impact it would have on the entire team."

The session, titled DiSC Sales Strategies: Building Relationships, was highly interactive, engaging, entertaining, and, most important, educational. Attendees participated in live online scenarios, including animated exercises and discussions. The day was divided into two sessions, with the morning session focused on understanding self and others to develop strategies for working together to increase the performance of the business. In the afternoon, participants applied the results of the a.m. session to the external environment by building a more effective sales strategy.

Prior to the full-day training session, each participant responded to the DiSC Online Response Form of the Personal Profile System—a multilevel learning instrument that helps individuals assess how much they use each dimension of behavior in a particular situation.

Customized manuals were created for each participant that included the paper version of the Personal Profile System, their personal scores, and three reports generated from the Personal Profile System for Windows Software: Increasing Your Personal Effectiveness: General

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Characteristics Report, Person's Natural Approach to Selling Report, and Managing Person in a Sales Environment Report.

The participants were then grouped into specific teams so they could communicate and share their General Characteristics Reports with each other. Most were amazed to discover how accurate the report was, even though it took only 10 minutes to complete. They found that an overused strength can become a limitation in certain situations. For example, participants discovered one strength of the *influence* Behavioral Style is "talking." In a sales environment, overusing that strength can be a limitation; talking too much detracts from listening to the customer's needs.

Through that process, participants recognized blind spots that were potentially hurting them and their relationships with their co-workers. The straightforward language and simple demonstrations were practical, and participants were able to discover a truth they could apply immediately. They could more effectively

- understand how they interact with different styles of behavior
- appreciate their co-workers as individuals and take the challenges of different styles less personally
- interact with co-workers whose styles may be different from theirs and might be intimidating in stressful situations
- identify how to read others' behavioral styles and how to use simple, proven techniques to respond more effectively
- adapt their responses so co-workers listen and are more open to communication and compromise in situations that require diplomacy on both sides
- communicate and work effectively with other employees.

The afternoon session focused on using the common language of DiSC to identify a buyer's style. With an understanding by participants of their own behavior styles and using a learning tool called the DiSC Sales Action Planner, they spent the afternoon session determining the best way to

open a sales call, make the presentation, negotiate, close the sale, and maintain positive customer relationships.

One participant says he now understands why he was having such a difficult time with one of his customers. Utilizing DiSC, this particular account manager discovered he's a primary dominant behavioral style. When selling, he wants to present "just the facts" and emphasize efficiency, results, and the bottom-line. But his customer's preferred behavioral style is *conscientiousness*, which requires detailed information on the accuracy, logic, quality, and reliability of the solution.

Building a long-term relationship with a customer goes beyond the products and services you offer. The relationship is also based on credibility and trust. Understanding and meeting customers' buying style needs demonstrates your interest in them as well as their business.

After the full-day session, each participant was given access to the online version of the DiSC Sales Action Planner in order to reinforce the training and provide day-to-day access to this tool to profile additional customers in real-world applications.

As a result of the training, participants discovered more effective ways to communicate with their colleagues and their customers. And Sony is building more productive teams, developing a more powerful salesforce, and improving customer service—all in a day's work!

*For further information visit
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