

## Creating Sales Effectiveness Through Behavior Training

**Authors:** **Lavelle Mills**, associate professor of management, Tarleton State University, Stephenville, TX 76402; 817/968-9050. **Frank Rachel**, professor of management, University of North Texas, Denton, TX 76203; 817/565-3150. **Sharon Gregg**, associate professor of marketing, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 37132; 615/898-2825.

**Abstract:** Traditionally, managers have viewed the training needs of salespeople through such attitudes as these:

- They need no training. Salespeople are born, not trained.
- Teach them the technical aspects of the product along with a canned presentation. The product will sell itself.
- Selling just happens.

Additionally, many people have stereotypical views of salespeople. But a realistic view of a successful salesperson is strongly tied to how the salesperson analyzes and responds to the behavior of prospective customers.

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the effects on sales results of a training program on interpersonal behavioral styles. The study focused on the belief that sales effectiveness can be increased if salespeople can learn a practical method of classifying people using the Social Style of Behavior model.

The research was a quasi-experimental design involving 26 commissioned salespeople. A control group was selected from the firm's other stores in the area. The experimental group participated in a 20-hour Social Style of Behavior training program tailored for the retail industry.

A profile of behavioral style was created for each salesperson in the experimental group, based on responses to a 150-adjective questionnaire completed by three to five references. The basic premise is that individuals do not know how their behavior is perceived by those with whom they work and asso-

ciate on a regular basis.

Post-training sales data revealed that the sales performance of the experimental group was significantly better than the control group, at a .10 level of significance. Although the firm's gross sales volume declined during this period, as did the economy of the area, the experimental group experienced significantly less decline than the control group.

Sales managers should seriously consider the impact that training in interpersonal behavioral styles can have on total sales performance. This study, involving a major retail firm, showed behavior style training to be effective for retail commissioned salespeople who primarily sold major appliances and furniture. The authors believe that such training would also help other salespeople, and the selling transaction in general, throughout the retail industry.

## Evaluation of In-House Presentation-Skills Training in Fortune 500 Industrial Companies

**Authors:** **Lloyd E. Corder** and **Donald B. Egolf**, Department of Communication, 1117 Cathedral of Learning, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260; 412/624-6567.

**Abstract:** Training programs can be evaluated on one of four levels:

- reaction (how well the participants liked the program);
- learning (what principles, facts, and techniques were learned);
- behavior (what changes in job behavior resulted from the program);
- results (how the program reduced cost, improved quality, or improved quantity).

The levels form a hierarchy: the time, effort, and cost of performing evaluations increase as you go from the first to the last level. They also provide an excellent framework for exploring the number and kinds of evaluations being conducted by corporate training directors.

With that in mind, the authors formulated a study of in-house

presentation-skills training. Their purpose was to determine the number and kinds of program evaluations currently being done.

Researchers sent questionnaires to the CEOs of the *Fortune* 500 industrial companies. They asked if the companies offer presentation-skills training, whether their in-house staffs provide the training, what kinds of evaluations are conducted, who sees the reports of the evaluations, and how the evaluation results are used.

A total of 180 responses were received (154 respondents completed surveys; 26 declined to participate).

The results of this study show that most of the companies (73 percent) provide training that is delivered by their in-house staffs. Most of that training (80 percent) is evaluated in some way. The most popular time for evaluation (95 percent) is at the conclusion of the training, with only 32 percent of the programs being evaluated at the development stage and 28 percent within six months of the training.

The findings confirm that the simplest kind of evaluation (reaction) is done the most often (91 percent), while the most time-consuming (results) is done the least (28 percent). The authors see a dramatic increase in the number of evaluations being conducted and in the levels of evaluation. The overall message of the study is that the long, hard fight to get trainers to start evaluating their programs may be paying off.

**"Research Capsules"** is a quarterly column compiled and edited by **Audre Wenzler**, a member of ASTD's Research Committee.

Send your suggestions for topics, your comments, and your submissions to Audre Wenzler, Director of Human Resources, Laventhol & Horwath, 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158, or contact her at 212/983-4100. Each contributor must include his or her name, address, and phone number, and an abstract or summary of the research. Contributors must be willing to respond to reader inquiries.