

product integrates with other products in the marketplace to enable customers to better meet their business goals.

Businesses today indicate they want to work with a company and people who understand their business, its goals, processes, and challenges, and who can make recommendations that support the customer in achieving their goals. Time is money, and businesses today will not invest their time with multiple vendors who only want to sell their product.

Organizational Profile

Apex Corporation is a manufacturer and distributor of high-tech, leading-edge solutions that enable improved business productivity and work-process improvements. It is a multinational corporation recognized as a leader in the field of business productivity improvement. Apex is a company that views quality as a business imperative. Its dedication to quality is pervasive throughout the company and has earned the company quality awards in the industry and high levels of customer satisfaction.

Apex sells its products and services in the United States through a sales force made up of more than 7,000 people. U.S. sales revenues across all products totaled more than \$10 billion.

Bob Murphy, chief executive officer (CEO) of Apex, announced in his CEO's report, "For [Apex] to be the industry leader in business productivity solutions, our customers require us to be partners in the success of their business, not a vendor...."

Organizational Learning and Performance Requirement

The training organization was assigned the task of ensuring that the sales force was "consultative" in its sales relationship with customers, and it was asked to begin implementation four months later. The training requirements organization, a subset of the training organization, immediately conducted interviews with senior managers to assess the details behind the strategic direction, understand the business implications of the goal, and assess the plausibility of meeting the targeted time frame. Other areas analyzed included current and potential sales channels, sales performance, sales force competence, field and headquarters support resources, staffing, compensation, management practices, environment, learning trends, and current sales force work practices. The requirements group also identified people considered to be role model performers currently in Apex.

The analysis reported findings in terms of the desired state, current state, and the learning and performance profile of critical personnel. The data revealed seven critical gaps in the following desired-state skill, knowledge, performance, and work practices:

- Field personnel understand a customer's business requirements.
- Field personnel are solutions oriented, not product oriented (solve all the customer's needs).
- Field personnel understand how Apex solutions solve business problems.
- Field personnel consistently meet the account's, or customer's, total productivity need.
- Field personnel plan strategically with their customer.
- Field personnel effectively link technology to business solutions.
- Field personnel consistently raise the level of contact within an account.

The analysis identified the criticality of these performance elements against the goal and determined it would take nine months to construct an intervention to meet the learning need. With this information, senior management agreed to the revised plan and increased the budget for development and implementation of the intervention.

Solution

To meet the requirements of senior management and the field, the solution was identified as a customer-centered sales strategy that focuses on understanding the customer's business, its goals and requirements, and how Apex enables customers to meet their goals. The solution reflects regional fluctuations in the marketplace, is strategic rather than tactical, with focus on complex customer environments and technologies, providing for learning within natural communities of practice (current and desired), and open to the company-owned sales force and strategic selling partners.

The field indicated a dissatisfaction with traditional learning formats. They were considered too long, took too much time away from selling activities, and contained too much information to be absorbed in the allotted time frame.

Learning Intervention

The program is called Customer Centered Selling. It is an advanced sales training program; the intended audience includes all levels of sales representatives (sales reps), systems analysts, sales managers, and analyst managers. It consists of preschool activities, instructor-led

ROI level? Would it be credible?

7. How would you critique the process used to isolate the effects of training.

8. What would your recommendations be to recapture the ROI?

The Author

Wade A. Hannum is currently manager of requirements planning for Xerox Corporation's United States Customer Operations and is responsible for translating business strategy into learning and performance strategy to achieve workforce preparedness. Hannum has 15 years' experience in HRD. He has supported the development of new sales channels, developed the U.S. training strategy, implemented ROI as a training evaluation strategy, managed annual contracting processes, and provided consulting support to Xerox training organizations in Canada, Latin America, Rank Xerox, and Fuji Xerox. He holds a B.S. in marketing from the University of Maryland and is an M.A. candidate in human resource management, also at the University of Maryland. Hannum can be contacted at the following address: Xerox Corporation, 421 Haskell Drive, Arnold, MD 21012-1152.

This case study is excerpted from Jack J. Phillips, ed., *Measuring Return on Investment*, Vol. 2 (Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press, 1997).

© 2009 the American Society for Training & Development. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, please go to www.copyright.com, or write Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923 (telephone: 978.750.8400, fax: 978.646.8600).

Ordering information: To order the book from which this selection is drawn or any other ASTD titles, visit the ASTD website at store.astd.org or call 800.628.2783 or 703.683.8100.

This *Sales Training Drivers* publication was published by ASTD Press. ASTD Press is an internationally renowned source of insightful and practical information on sales training, sales team development, sales leadership development, and workplace learning and performance.

ISBN: 978-1-60728-203-7