

Driving Organic Growth

Evolve or die. That was the choice we faced.

—Kirk Kimler

President (former), Fisher HealthCare, Division of ThermoFisher Scientific, Inc.

The Situation

The executive team of Fisher HealthCare realized they were at a crossroads: continue business as usual, slowly losing market share and profitability, or reorient and reinvigorate the business strategy. After thoroughly analyzing target market segments and developing a detailed strategic business plan to drive market share growth and operating income targets, the executives were faced with implementing much of the plan through what they considered a mediocre, at best, sales force. The sales force, however, considered itself seasoned and successful, having many years of experience. They did not initially share the same sense of urgency to change business and sales practices. Most salespeople were hitting their current performance targets and many had achieved their best results year ever. The new strategic business plan, however, called for a dramatic and urgent shift in sales strategy and tactics. In particular, the sales force needed to shift from a largely transactional, commodity-oriented sale to a solution sale, which included the company's traditional commodity-type products and a new suite of higher margin capital equipment, specialty products, and optional services. Executive management had serious concerns that its sales force would or could make the necessary changes to execute on the new plan.

The Solution

Forum designed a comprehensive, 18-month sales skill learning system, explicitly linking the development of consultative selling skills and processes to Fisher's new business strategy. It addressed the entire sales organization, from top management down through territory sales reps. Phase I immersed senior leaders in an intensive 2-day workshop to align them with their new business strategy, and engaged them in shaping the rollout of the sales learning system. Phase II communicated the sales strategy developed by the senior leaders to the district sales managers, and engaged them in an interactive workshop to develop effective coaching skills. Phase III involved line sales reps in learning and practicing consultative selling skills while their sales managers observed and coached them. The sales managers' participation in the workshops with their reps increased the impact for everyone. Sales reps received intensive feedback, sales managers practiced their coaching skills (as well as received feedback from Forum facilitators), and sales managers and their teams began to establish new behavior patterns with each other. Later, phases IV and V addressed additional selling skills including negotiations, senior-level selling, and key account management. Forum established a small, dedicated faculty who were able to increase the relevance and impact of the workshops because they understood the client business strategy and culture so well.



The Impact

District sales managers very quickly bought into the business strategy and the learning system designed to help them implement the strategy. Managers displayed high energy and engagement in the sales skill workshops, and followed through on their field assignment to observe, coach, and support the salespeople as they applied new selling skills. Very early in the rollout of the learning system, customers and salespeople both began to report *unsolicited* that skillful, customer-focused use of questions by Fisher salespeople was helping customers better understand their own issues and uncovering important customer business needs and new selling opportunities.

From 2003 to the end of 2006 Fisher HealthCare’s operating income increased 80 percent, greatly surpassing expectations for this key business metric. The sponsoring executive was promoted first from VP, Marketing, to President of Fisher HealthCare Division, and then later promoted and assigned to lead a group of companies in another part of the business.

Forum helps business leaders execute their strategies through people. Using a combination of advisory and learning services, Forum accelerates strategy implementation, minimizes risk, and maximizes earnings for clients.

Drawing on nearly four decades of experience and research-based insights in learning design, consulting, and facilitation, Forum brings about changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that enable employees to achieve and exceed the desired benefits of strategic change, to reduce time to improved performance, and to sustain the change over the long term.

Forum helps organizations transform their sales force, refocus on the customer, shift to a performance culture, and develop leaders at all levels. Its work contributes not only to increased profitability for clients, but also to increased market share, revenue growth, and customer and employee loyalty.

Since 1971, clients worldwide have trusted Forum to bring their most important strategic initiatives to life.

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