



Case study

Increasing Sales Performance and Retention





A 70:20:10 Solutions Delivers Results for a Global Pharma Company

Client Situation

This is a leading global pharmaceutical company specializing in dermatology and critical care. With employees in 61 countries and products sold in more than 100 countries.

The company has a vision of becoming the world's leading specialty pharma company within its focus areas and is expanding into new regions and markets bringing competitive drugs and therapies to patients with unmet medical needs.

The Challenge

In 2015 this company defined a new sales strategy to respond to an increasingly competitive marketplace with many big new players coming into their sector. They needed to differentiate the company from the competition to maintain and increase business volumes.

The sales organization faced a difference between the strategy and its execution, and many first-line sales managers (FLSMs) struggled to apply the new strategy in their markets. Senior management wanted to minimise the time the FLSMs took off for training, while maintaining standards of quality. Because of this gap in performance, several markets did not achieve their sales targets.

The commercial excellence team was engaged to examine the challenge on a systems level, not just supporting these managers, but tackling the whole infrastructure in each market and solving problems in co-creation with the professionals involved. This was a departure from past requests from field leaders to “fix the FLSMs” with a new sales leadership program.

The Solution

To execute the needs assessment, the commercial excellence team used the human performance improvement model (similar to the Performance Detective) to begin the process. They held several live online sessions to gain the commitment of the internal clients, the country managers, and used many visuals to explain what they intended to do. They translated all the analysis materials into French and Chinese to be sure that language was not a barrier during this process.

Business analysis: Together with stakeholders within the business of each market, they determined the most critical business issues connected to market share and competition.



Performance analysis: Current performance was determined in terms of sales and market share in the two target markets of Algeria and China.

Performance gaps: Working with the business, they determined the desired performance, with the primary focus on FLSMs. When the current and desired performance was clear, they could describe the performance gaps as follows:

- Market sales were below target levels
- Sales growth for target hospitals was not meeting goals
- Turnover rates for top performers were higher than desired
- Sales team turnover overall was higher than target levels.

Influence Analysis: The L&D team interviewed and visited leaders and FLSMs in both markets to identify influencing factors which impacted performance. The factors included:

- Unclear expectations on strategy and execution
- Segmentation and targeting not clearly defined or followed up on
- Unclear and complex processes
- Incentives plans not aligned with the strategy
- Hiring processes not aligned with field needs.

The Approach

The design process, using Performance Architect guidelines, involved four steps which included gaining stakeholder commitment and presenting a prototype.

Step 1 - Prepare the design sessions

Choosing the participants: It was important to plan design sessions with professionals with an open mind. The design team consisted of the internal consultant from the commercial excellence team (also the practice lead), the manager of the team and the general manager of the markets, along with some FLSMs in each market.

Designing with the result in mind: The result in mind is the connection with the business and performance needs analysis, including the influence factors.

Step 2 - Generate ideas in a design lab

They created a meeting with deep reflection about the current and the desired practices for each market and called this the design lab. The participants were ready for out of the box thinking. They brainstormed about the future state of the markets and came up with a list of wishes about the future for each market.

They organized validation sessions with the top performers to gain their commitment to the design process. The team wanted to include the ideas and concerns of top performers around the future state of the market.



Step 3 - Choose usable ideas and sketches

The ideas and list of wishes of the future were very inspirational and energized the design team. They converted the ideas and wishes into relevant and useful criteria about the future state of each market.

Step 4 - Present a prototype

They created a prototype of the design based on the 70:20:10 reference model and after that developed the components of the design in detail. It had been agreed that they would work on the solutions in an agile way to be able to respond to changes in the environment during the work process.

The solutions that are visualized in the diagram below in the '70' and the '20' were all based in the workplace and embedded in the work processes of all involved professionals. Even one of the formal training solutions took place in the workplace (the co-ride training and coaching). The workplace solutions in the "70" were used to remove some of the influence barriers that were found in the needs analysis phase (e.g. the description of the performance standards).

The 70-20-10 design

Social learning solutions (20)

- Communicate new standards and set targets and objectives together with sales reps
- Share issues with line-managers, get more perspectives in order to find solution
- Share experience with other FLSMs, Marketing and Medical
- Share best practices and positive experiences
- Start using forums (e.g. Yammer)

Solutions in the workplace (70)

- Establish performance standards
- Redefine standard for segmentation and targeting
- Create standard for call planning and change process
- Create coaching and mentoring standard
- Design development plans
- Create standard for co-ride report
- Engage high performers by recognizing efforts
- Design standards for competitive intelligence and market insights

Formal learning solutions (10)

- High-performing reps to train/do co-rides with other reps
- Establish competitor training as part of introduction training with scientific affairs
- Document actions in coaching report
- FLSM training on goal setting and standards

Business Results

This practice achieved clear business results: sales increased significantly in four totally different markets, the turnover rate decreased gradually, the hospital listings boomed from random to highly targeted offerings and the company's growth exploded with 14% in just two years, compared to only 0.05%, the growth percentage of most of its competitors.



The solution impacted the first-line sales managers, the sales representatives and the organizational and process influences. We achieved huge performance improvements in both markets.

Client Value

The commercial excellence team and other stakeholders described their insights and value gained from the experience (direct quotes):

- Focus on a few strategic, tangible business objectives – we used to focus on all products in the portfolio. Today we are focusing on short-term sales and long-term business.
- Clear active contribution and commitment from top management throughout the process is critical. We learned to draw up communication plans and standards and acted on them.
- Ensure that the top management really listens and accepts what is brought forward during the whole process.
- Transparency: the more open you are about gaps, problems and needs, the easier it is to get a customized solution.
- Use multiple sources of data, triangulate findings (data, survey, co-rides, individual sources and team)). Your initial idea of the situation can differ if you use these multiple sources.
- Be prepared for sometimes-irrational feelings and emotions, and deal with them. Prepare core team members for this. This speeds up buy-in among team members.
- Be aware that participants tend to jump into solution mode, bypassing the true root causes.
- Get to the root of the problem, accept what you see, deal with it!
- Using your own benchmark for top performance ensures sustainable ongoing excellence, constantly improving top and average performers.
- Co-creating with different staff departments and professionals in the business is an important success factor of performance improvement in all markets.

“Use the same approach and methodology in every market. We used the 70:20:10 methodology with Human Performance Improvement as a starting point. That works very well for all markets and everybody is developing the same language.”