

Infusion of Professional Selling Skills Stimulates Healthier Sales Environment for Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Kansas

Company

Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Kansas

Industry

A leading provider of health insurance services in the state of Kansas

Strategy

Create a competitive differentiation for BCBSKS by establishing it as the insurer who listens better and meets the needs of its insureds better.

Implementation

Use AchieveGlobal's time-tested Professional Selling Skills(PSS) program delivered by BCBSKS certified AchieveGlobal trainers. Deliver PSS refresher skills to sales representatives across three regions.

Results

Improved rep probing skills and closing skills and financial results. Using even the most conservative estimates, the ROI on the program investment was 250%.

AchieveGlobal helps insurer achieve significant training ROI

As any true athlete knows, running the fundamentals again and again is essential if victory is to be won. Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Kansas, as a major health insurer in the state, has to be nimble while superior in its efforts to win and retain business in a highly competitive industry.

To ensure its leadership position especially in a challenging market environment, the company realized that a return to basics in its sales endeavors was vital. This need was recognized by Andy Corbin, then Vice President, Marketing, for BCBSKS, now President, who said, "The further you are away from the training, the more you revert to shortcut approaches. A return to basics, especially in a tough market, is critical."

The insurer has embraced ongoing training for the organization for a long time, but recently focused on engaging its sales professionals in a refresher course, using the Professional Selling Skills (PSS) program from AchieveGlobal, the international leader in business improvement training.

PSS, taught by AchieveGlobal-certified BCBSKS trainer Kay Hodison, Workforce and Leadership Development Coordinator, was presented to 26 sales representatives across three regions in a three-day PSS refresher course. All reps are exposed to

PSS when they join the insurer, though, as Corbin noted, training loses impact over time.

"The further out one is from the training, skills get sloppy," reiterates Dr. Paula Daoust, Director, Workforce and Leadership Development, "which underlines the need for ongoing training to get a dramatic return."

And BCBSKS realized a dramatic return as a result.

Daoust rightly points out that when measuring return on training, improvements can be attributed to a number of factors, including training, economic conditions and other effects. To zero in specifically on what the influence PSS training had on the \$1.6 million sales following the training, Daoust and her team made sure measurements were as comparable as possible. Thus, she counted in the ROI only the reps participating in the PSS refresher who had also been in sales with the organization in 2003, to which she could compare their individual sales in 2003 and 2005.

"Any rep in the refresher who was not with us in 2005 we took out of the current measurement. We needed revenue sales for 2003 and 2005 for specific people in the refresher so we could compare their post-refresher sales for an apples-to-apples comparison," Daoust says.



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Kay Hodison, Workforce Coordinator, and
Paula Daoust, Director of Workforce and Leadership Development
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas

To isolate that portion of the sales increase that could be reasonably attributed to the PSS training, Daoust asked three sales managers to assign a percentage to their perception of training's contribution to the sales growth. The turnaround methodology she used called for the averaging of the managers' replies, which were 50, 40 and 40 percent.

Based on managers' estimates, the portion of the \$1.6 million sales increase attributable to the PSS refresher trainer was \$645,168. Daoust again refined the ROI more conservatively, arbitrarily attributing just 10% of results to the training, still a powerful \$161,000 return on a total training investment of under \$46,000.

"What this says," Daoust points out, "is that at this most-conservative ROI, for every dollar we spent on training we got back \$2.50 in sales...and \$13 in return by the managers' 40% average estimate. Either way, the numbers say training makes a difference."

Representatives participating in the refresher found PSS' component on probing skills very helpful, especially for the more seasoned. "It provided all with a clear understanding of how to use the probe to be more effective, especially for asking open and closed probes and when to use either," Hodison noted. "Furthermore, the focus on handling customer concerns and resolving them more effectively was also very helpful. Reps can now better address customer indifference, misunderstandings or skepticism."

The refresher course also helped to reiterate a common sales skills and behavior language for the overall organization. "When you have one consistent mode of training you know the message is going to be consistent throughout the organization," Hodison notes. "We've also been able to extend these skills to non-sales professionals within the organization. For example, now our care management nurses, who work the phones in a service environment to help our insureds remain healthy, probe better and overcome objectives more skillfully."

About AchieveGlobal

In the 21st century, the level of human skills will determine organization success. AchieveGlobal provides exceptional development in interpersonal business skills giving companies the workforce they need for business results. Located in over 40 countries, we offer multi-language, learning based solutions – globally, regionally and locally.

We understand the competition you face. Your success depends on people who have the skills to handle the challenges beyond the reach of technology. We're experts in developing these skills, and it's these skills that turn your strategies into business success in the 21st century.

These are things technology can't do. Think. Learn. Solve problems. Listen. Motivate. Explain. People with these skills have a bright future in the 21st century. AchieveGlobal prepares you for that world.



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